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THE VIOLIN:
ITS FAMOUS MAKERS AND PLAYERS

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BY

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Chapter I

ORIGIN AND CONSTRUCTION

IN the light of the thorough-going methods of historical research, it is strange, but not without poetical significance, that the origin of so great a cultural factor and joy-giver to mankind as the violin should have remained to this day more or less a matter of conjecture.

Musical historians are confronted by the astonishing fact of its existence towards the end of the Sixteenth Century in its present form on which, it is true, subsequent great makers have been able to improve in certain details but not in essentials. Who, however, was its creator?

To Gasparo da Salò, an Italian born in 1542, is generally attributed the honor of having made the first violins; but beyond the probability that some instruments authentically of his making are the oldest unmistakable violins which have come down to us, nothing is known to warrant the assumption that he really invented the violin form. Nor has it been possible to prove this claim in the case of another famous instrument maker, one Gaspar Duiffoprugar or Tieffenbrucker— as he is supposed to have been a Bavarian by birth—who lived in Lyons in the second half of the Sixteenth Century and made superb lutes and viols.

What historians do know on irrefutable evidence is that our kingly instrument was the final offshoot of a mixed and often questionable family of bowed instruments, the begin-

nings of which are lost in the long past of Eastern nations, together with those of the harp, drum and flute.

From about the middle of the Eighth Century of our era instruments played with the bow appear in the historical records of Europe, documentary and otherwise; and by means of illuminated book illustrations and wood and stone carvings, etc., it has been possible for the historian to trace their gradual development from their crudest to more perfect forms.

Generally speaking, two principal forms may be distinguished: In one some see a combination of the Greek lyra and monochord—to which in some way the fiddle bow, probably an immigrant from the East, associated itself—it resembled our guitar, and showed in some cases a well defined top, back and sides with side curvatures, and sound holes; the other was pear-shaped and without sides and more in the form of a mandolin.

From these two forms, especially the first-mentioned one, evolved in the course of centuries, appeared and disappeared under the name of fiddle, fiedel, rebecca, rebec, geige, gigue, viol, etc., an indefinite number of bowed instruments of different size, shape, number of strings and pitch, till we reach the time immediately preceding the appearance of the violin. At this period, the majority of bowed instruments representing the outcome of this long, slow evolutionary process, and the highest expression of the instrument-maker's art, belong to the viol kind of which the guitar-shaped *fiedel* was the prototype and which lives yet in the ponderous form of our double bass. Some few are yet also recognizable as the descendant of the pear-shaped minstrel fiddle or rebec, as it was called.

A merely superficial comparison, however, of the violin with any of these instruments, even the nearest related to it in shape, the viola da braccio (arm viol, in opposition to the viol held between the knees, the viola da gamba) — reveal differences so vital and surprising that no conjectures based on it have brought the historian any nearer the solution of the problem of the invention of the violin form, any more than the contention that this could not have been the work of one man but was the fruit of the successful labors of many makers unknown to fame, as for instance the gradual improvements on the viol form.

However this may be and whatever the exact facts and data with respect to the creation of the violin, the hand of man never made anything more ingenious and more perfect. Perhaps the most amazing thing in connection with it and the proof of its perfection is that in the three hundred years or so which have passed since it made its first appearance, men have not been able to improve on it; on the contrary, every attempt to alter its form materially has resulted in dismal failure. Where in the whole realm of human inventive effort is there another example of which this can be said? Think only of other musical instruments of the last hundred years, the piano, for instance. Think of the first railway steam engine which is yet to be seen at the South Kensington Museum in London, and compare it with a modern one; think of the prototype of any other invention of the last fifty years and hold against it its present day successor, and the perfection of the violin form as it left the Italian master shops two hundred and fifty years ago stands out like the nearest approach to the unattainable ideal that man ever reached in any of his handiwork.

And what is most significant, whatever complex evolutionary processes and inventive thought may have gone before, perfection here is the result of the utmost simplicity of construction. It has been said that it is possible to make a violin with a penknife as the only tool. The instrument so produced may not turn out very satisfactorily, but the mere possibility of such a feat requires no further comment. The construction at all events, is, broadly speaking, the same as in the finest Stradivari, and so is the material, i.e., only wood and good fish glue to hold the boards together.

Examine a little more closely this construction which makes for such perfection: if one may speak of a principal part in a sounding organism where every part has respect to the whole and the whole depends on the working perfection of every part, the principal part of a violin is the top, or, as it is called in German, *die Decke*. It consists of two pieces glued together lengthwise and is almost always made of pine. Why pine and not oak or maple or some other kind of wood? Because the wood of pine, especially of a slowly grown, old tree, by virtue of its peculiar fibrous, loose and yet tough nature is best suited for the purpose it is here put to, namely, to be set into vibration and to conduct these vibrations rapidly lengthwise in the direction of its fibres. It is, one may say, the most musical of woods. While sides and back of the violin are usually of maple, sometimes of pear or some acoustically less favorable wood, pine wood shares with glass and steel the peculiarity of possessing the highest degree of elasticity in inanimate bodies, that is, the faculty of its molecules for regaining their original form or position when by some exterior influence or force this has been altered or replaced. This

elasticity or vibratory faculty in pine is greatest in the direction of its fibres. According to Savart, the great French *savant*, the velocity of conducting sound is in pine wood (in the direction of its fibres) fifteen to sixteen times greater than in air, while perpendicularly it is only two to four times as great. In maple the proportion is only ten to twelve times as great in the lengthwise and four to five times as great in the perpendicular direction.

Now the top of the violin is the part which is made to vibrate first and foremost and thus requires doing so more freely than other parts of the instrument which vibrate only mediately and in exact proportion to it. It may be said to correspond to the face and front of man which, as compared to his back, receives in the first instance all sense-impressions and conveys them further.

The bow by being drawn across the strings sets them into vibration, the strings cause the bridge to vibrate in sympathy and through the feet of the bridge the vibrations reach the top. If that top is of the best vibrating (acoustic) quality of wood, it fulfills its purpose best. But by itself, no matter how freely it may respond to this call on its elasticity, the sound or the tone it emits would be far from satisfactory, much less a true violin tone. The top now in its turn communicates its vibrations to the sides or ribs and through these, as well as the little piece of wood noticeable at the inside of the instrument (a little to the back of the spot where the right foot of the bridge rests) which is called the sound post—to the back, causing it to vibrate, too, only according to the different quality of wood, less freely, i.e., more in the nature of, as it were, an echo of the vibrations of the top. And through the combined, practically simul-

taneous vibrations of these various parts, top, sides and back in a certain acoustical proportion to each other, the volume of air inside the violin body is set in vibratory motion:—the tone is created and escapes through the sound holes, and floating on the air becomes audible to the listener as violin tone.

This, the vibratory process as such wonderful though it may seem, follows only the laws of acoustics, but the mind stands in wonder at the ingenuity of man, who in the construction of the violin created the perfect conditions for these laws to operate. Suppose the top to be of maple and the back of pine: the admired tone would not come forth. Again, suppose that there were no FF holes; the result would be an indistinct muffled sound; or, if the sound post were missing, the sonority would be gone. Indeed, anything else, even the smallest item in the familiar form missing or altered would mar or destroy the perfection and beauty of tone. In a fine old violin it must be admitted, this perfection is alone fully realized. But even inferior material and workmanship, as exhibited in cheap instruments, cannot annihilate the inherent qualities of the violin tone or be said to invalidate the claim of perfection made for the instrument in general.

What has been touched upon is only one part of this wondrous piece of mechanism. Examine the inside of a violin: to all appearances it is an empty shell, only the little piece of wood referred to as the sound post being noticeable. In reality however the inside of a violin is no less ingeniously wrought than its visible parts, only its construction serves other purposes. If the top were to be removed one would find glued around the back linings of thin strips of

wood as well as small wooden blocks set in at the four corners; and under the top, running lengthwise, a narrow bow-shaped bar, called the base bar. Now, incredible as it seems, these slender means of support, together with the peculiar arching of top and back and the marvelous adjustment of all the parts by which resistance and elasticity of structure are held in perfect equilibrium, give the instrument the power to withstand for centuries a strain which, in proportion to the size and weight of the violin, not the mightiest engine devised by man could resist even a few years!

Figures will make this still clearer: There is a tension longitudinally by the strings amounting to about eighty pounds and there is a pressure on the top through the bridge of something like twenty-six pounds, together about one hundred pounds. Now imagine this frail body of wood, weighing no more than eight and a half ounces avoirdupois subjected to this strain continually for two hundred years! Imagine the trembling and shaking that is going on in every part of it when the bow is drawn across the strings, not now and again, but billions of times through generations of players! Imagine the influence of climate and weather, careless exposure and rough usage! Imagine all this,—and, on the other hand, only thin boards and fish glue!

Much more could be said of the ingenuity stored up in even the commonest violin, but to choose only a few items: Take the bridge. It looks a queerly shaped, whimsically designed device; alter its form in the least and the effect on the tone of a Stradivari is immediate. Only hundreds of progressive attempts secured the final perfection. This has been revealed by the many pattern designs this greatest of

violin-makers left, in addition to, and improving on, those of his predecessor and master, Nicola Amati, and probably unnumbered tentative efforts in the same direction before. Or look at the quaintly shaped sound holes. Why two F F's? Why just at that particular place in the top? Why? One may point to the smallest thing in the construction and stand before an enigma solved, solved marvelously and for all time. Even the little stick inside which by reason of its subtle but decisive influence on the tone the French call *l'âme*, the soul of the instrument, represents only one of the many indispensable links in the long chain of inventive thought which went to the creation of the violin.

And now, last, see this beautiful form, these natural, easy, graceful curves, the undulations in top and back, as though the body had been moulded in the act of heaving a deep breath; look at the fine black line around the top, the purfling,—a mere ornament to be sure, but how exquisitely conceived, how unobtrusively it emphasizes the graceful outlines of the form. Imagine it missing, or painted only, and one has the horror of a face without eyebrows, or these only painted black. Look at the coloring, the varying tints, the luminous transparency of the varnish; the scroll, so simple, noble and expressive; the right, the convenient size for the instrument to nestle snugly on the player's breast, between his heart and head, as though drawing from both inspiration! And have we not in one and all these features the happy outward expression of the beautiful voice, the life within?

This then is the violin of which the world is rightly enamored and which, if its creation was not actually a divine inspiration seems fit to have been one, a gift to man-

kind from above, so that men's lives on earth may be sweetened and brightened by it.

Chapter II

MAKERS

NECESSITY is said to have been the mother of most inventions,—unless it was opportunity or chance. What were the factors, musical, historical and, if you will, psychological, which are likely to have contributed to, invited or precipitated the invention of the violin?

Musically, we find that music-making which in the earlier Middle Ages was largely in the hands of strolling players and minstrels had entered on a new and broader phase when in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries the growing importance of the cities induced the professional devotees of fiddle, flute and other instruments to give up their roving habits and seek such employment as life in the city offered. As at the same time (towards the end of the Fourteenth Century) polyphonic writing and with it choral singing had received a powerful impetus through the genius of Dunstable, Dufay and the early Netherland contrapuntists, instrumentalists were drawn upon to accompany the singing in the churches. This led to the need of kindred instruments of different pitch. But while it was met with in regard to the lower-toned ones, corresponding to bass, tenor and alto through improvements made on instruments of the viol family, (particularly since the introduction of corner blocks which permitted a greater tension of the strings,) there was no instrument to go with the soprano except the unsuitable coarse-toned cornet.

By itself however, this, although usually adduced, would scarcely seem a sufficient reason for the exercise of so much inventive power as went to the creation of the violin. For the more immediate causes and the accompanying circumstances of its birth one should more logically go to Italy which claims it for one of her glories, the Italy of the middle and second half of the Sixteenth Century.

It was a time of great men, great deeds and great events. Her early renaissance of antique culture had been followed by an unparalleled activity of great painters, sculptors and architects, and in their train came that remarkable awakening of musical art which we identify with the names of Palestrina, Carissimi, Gabrieli and others. If we add to these signs of the times over which blazed also in letters of gold the discovery of America and that of the sea route to India, the material prosperity of the people of Northern Italy through commerce and trade; the natural stimulus this brought and the consequent high state of all the arts and crafts, of glass spinning in Venice, jewelry in Florence, armour and instrument-making in Brescia, etc.,— if we take all this, the outward conditions for a supreme effort in *lutherie* seem to have been as favorable as possible.

Life, moreover, was not for the craftsman and artisan in Italy what it was even then in more northern latitudes. A genial climate came to the help of one who wished to spend long years in study and unremunerative labor. Thus, with beauty and art and nature and material comforts surrounding him, with the examples of high artistic strife on all sides, the right man of genius in his line, a man with a surely trained hand and eye, with love for his work, enthusiasm, patience and industry, needed only some little out-

side or inside incentive to set him to working on the great task which has meant so much for musical art.

Whoever he was, perhaps he was a dreamer-luthier who one day in St. Mark's at Venice heard Marcello sound the "vox celesta" on the organ and in his heart aflame carried the sublime message home with him to his small workshop and there toiled until the violin was created.

Of Gasparo da Salò little more is known than that he was born at, and called after the little town of Salò on the Lake of Garda, his father's name being Bertolotti; that he lived, worked and died at Brescia, then the chief centre of *lutherie* in Italy, and left one pupil, Paolo Maggini who carried his master's work to greater perfection. Maggini, born 1581 in Brescia and early apprenticed to da Salò, may be regarded as the founder of the Brescian School of violin making which flourished for a time by the side of the more famous Cremonese School, represented by the Amati family and their pupils. While da Salò also made viols and other instruments Maggini seemed to have confined himself almost entirely to the creation of violins. This is significant, as it goes to prove that, considering the early date of his birth the new instrument was at once eagerly sought and cultivated by music lovers.

Maggini's violins, a number of which still exist, are highly appreciated and rightly so, as apart from their historical value they are of rare beauty of tone and workmanship. Maggini himself is believed to have died during the plague raging at Brescia in 1632.

Passing over his pupils and imitators as of minor importance except perhaps to the historian and violin expert, we come to the school of the Amatis.

The head and founder of this celebrated family which for more than one hundred years enjoyed an undisputed supremacy in the art of violin making, Andreas Amati, was born about 1520; thus, as an older contemporary of Gasparo da Salò, he may with the same or greater right claim the distinction of having been one of the first who worked in the new form, if he did not create it.

Unfortunately his instruments of which a good number are said to have existed as late as the end of the Eighteenth Century, i.e., just before the French Revolution, are virtually lost and with them the means of comparison with da Salò's work. Judging by the instruments left by his two sons, Anthony and Jerome (Hieronymus) the early Cremonese pattern must have differed considerably from that of the contemporary Brescian makers in being smaller and the outlines daintier; and the tone, in keeping with this outward appearance, more of a sweet and mellow than of a rich quality.

The fame of the Amatis reached its climax in the son of Jerome, Nicola Amati, one of the greatest masters in the art and the teacher of Stradivari and Andreas Guarneri, head of the family of this name.

While in his earlier work Nicolo leaned to the traditional, small pattern of his predecessors of the Amati family which he invested with a fine quality of his workmanship, he eventually adopted a larger form in which he created his most admired masterworks.

With his son Jerome the prestige of the Amati quickly declined and passed over to the most illustrious of all makers, Antonio Stradivari.

Nicolo, born 1596, lived long enough to see his life work perpetuated by a large number of pupils and followers

who in their turn established themselves in various Italian towns, such as Milan, Ferraro, Rome, Venice, Naples, etc., forming so many new centres of an activity which was to continue with unparalleled success for another hundred years.

And in this connection also another great maker, one of the very few outside Italy, arrests attention, namely, Jacobus Stainer, born 1621 at Apsam near Innsbruck in the Tyrol. Although not a pupil of Nicolo Amati as more recent research has proved contrary to an old belief, Stainer's work closely resembles that of the Amati school while possessing certain marked original features. In another respect also Jacobus Stainer whose troubled, poverty-haunted, sorrowful life . . . . he died a raving maniac . . . . solicits our deepest sympathy, deserves a special niche in the gallery of great violin-makers.

To him though indirectly is due the wholesale production of violins in Germany and France, which has done more than it gets credit for towards popularizing and spreading violin art over the whole world.

Stainer's pupil Matthias Klotz, head of the family of makers of that name, at his master's death introduced at Mittenwald in Bavaria violin-making on a large scale on the plan of divided labor. The success of the undertaking (Mittenwald has erected a monument in grateful memory of its benefactor) induced two villages on the Saxon and Bohemian frontier, Klingenthal and Markneukirchen, as well as Mirecourt in France, to follow and expand on the experiment, with what success is well known.

To turn back to Cremona and the Seventeenth Century we reach the culmination of violin art in Antonio Stradivari.

Providence seems to have specially fitted this extraordinary man for accomplishing his great mission in the world. Blessed on the one hand with a constitution which permitted him to work with all the vigor of youth at an age when ordinary men are obliged to lay down their tools, he possessed on the other hand the strong will, patience and perseverance which, if allied to self reliance, self criticism and genius make great men in every branch of human activity.

Born 1644 at Cremona, the descendant of an old Cremonese family, he was a lad apprenticed to Nicolo Amati in whose services he seems to have remained until the age of twenty-four, acquiring all that was to be learned from old Nicolo in the way of executive facility, knowledge of wood, etc. For the next twenty years, although working for himself, he adhered in general to Nicolo's pattern. Then followed a period of greatly restricted productivity which it is believed the master devoted to further study and experiments. Not until about 1700, as a man of fifty-six, did he present to the world those matchless gems of violins which forever became identified with his name.

It is not possible here to go into any of the details which distinguish the Stradivari violins of the master's ripe and best creative period from those of all his predecessors and contemporaries and from his own earlier productions. Suffice it to say that apart from the pattern which is larger, with diminished arching and correspondingly increased thickness in the wood, the workmanship, from the nobly carved scroll to the exquisite purfling, is of the utmost perfection. The master worked until a year before his death at the age of ninety-three. In the last few years only did he show a decrease in his powers.

Stradivari's influence has been incalculable, not only directly through his wonderful instruments, the delight they have afforded to countless thousands and the powerful stimulus they have given to violin art and creative musical art in general, but indirectly through his numerous pupils and imitators, many of whom belong to the best Italian makers of the second rank. Only a few are here mentioned: Carlo Bergonzi, who with his two sons Michael Angelo and Nicolo continued in his master's house and workshop; Lorenzo Guadagnini, Alessandro Gagliano who like Andreas Amati and Matthias Klotz became the founder of a large family of makers at Rome; Francesco Gobetti and Domenico Montagnana, both working subsequently in Venice.

There remains yet to be mentioned one other Cremonese name of inspiring sound to violin students, amateurs and collectors, that of the Guarneri. They, too, are represented in the annals of the art by several members; and from the head of the family, Andreas Guarneri, already referred to as Nicolo Amati's pupil and his two sons, Joseph and Petrus, to Joseph's son Peter and a third Peter, a nephew of the former, they all made beautiful violins which command a high price. But another Joseph Guarnerius born in 1683, a nephew of Andreas, popularly known after his label inscription as "Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù" enjoys the distinction of being, at least in his best productions, the equal of Stradivari. Legend has been busy weaving stories around the life of this great master, some of them of melodramatic character and suggested no doubt by an unexplained inequality in his work. Paganini's preference for a Guarnerius del Gesù violin which he called his "Cannon"

and bequeathed to his native city Genoa is here mentioned *en passant.*

This Joseph Guarneri's death marks the beginning of the end of the great master period of violin making in Italy. A number of very good makers, mostly pupils and imitators of Stradivari and their direct pupils, upheld by example and precept for a few decades longer the noble prestige of the past; but after their death the art rapidly declined and has never been revived to anything like the same lustre in Italy or any other country, notwithstanding the strenuous earnest efforts of many an honest and clever maker. When we come to ask the reason for the undeniably great superiority of the old Italian products over those of all subsequent makers we stand before an insolvable enigma. The argument that age is the great factor in favor of the Italian master-works does not hold good in the face of experience and physical science, nor any other factor hitherto brought forth. More probably is this superiority due to many or all favorable factors combined: namely, carefully chosen and well seasoned wood; a varnish, the recipe or exact method of application of which may, for all we know, be lost; a climate which favored slow drying in the open air; consummate workmanship which in times when men lived quieter, simpler and cheaper lives could come to its own; and —the most important factor—the particular genius, the love, patience and intelligent enthusiasm which were necessary for the creating of just this kind of noble art and craft work.

While now with the best makers it is only a matter of copying as faithfully and minutely as possible the works left by these early Italian masters, it was with them, even the lesser ones, the art of creating on more or less original

lines and by more or less original methods after a general pattern, the originality showing itself like a trade mark of the maker now in the shape of the F F holes, the scroll, etc., now in the design of the side curvatures, the color of the varnish or in several of these minor features.

With regard to wood the best Italian makers were for the most part extremely fastidious. Not seldom they would prefer patching with one kind of wood, if it just suited their requirements, to using other wood. It is said that much of the maple employed by them came to Venice from the Dalmatian coast and the Levant in the form of rudders on the galleys. Well seasoned with salt water it must have been in this case.

And as for knowledge of wood! It is told of Jacobus Stainer that he went into the wild mountain fastnesses of the Tyrol and picked out trees the wood of which he wished to use for his violins, usually such as had already begun to die off at the top. That further, before felling a tree (with his own hands, too) he would knock with a hammer against the trunk and listen to its sound, to its musical soul as it were. What did he hear? Only he knew. He also, it is said, would sit at the foot of steep inclines from which felled trees were being hurled down into the valley, and listen to the tone they emitted in falling from boulder to boulder.*

The influence of age and use on a violin is much a matter of speculation. One thing is certain: a badly made fiddle and one made of poor wood will never through age or use become a good one, not if it were played on for ten hours a day for a century. A good violin usually brings its good qualities into the world with it.

*The Author's *Story of the Violin.*

Chapter III

EARLY FIDDLERS

WHO from seeing a Stradivari violin hanging up in a shop window could draw safe conclusions with regard to its tonal possibilities in the hands of a great player? Or who, without having heard and seen a violin played would even imagine what can be done with it? In the same or a worse position of conjectural uncertainty is the musical historian with regard to the early evolutionary stages of, what for want of a better word, we will call fiddle playing. All he has to guide him chronologically and base his conjectures on are the crude and mostly inaccurate representations of mediaeval bowed instruments in wood, stone and illuminated drawings and occasional illusions to the accomplishments of the players of these instruments in contemporary literature.

Leaving aside the Eastern representatives of the art of fiddle and bow who probably at no time differed much from the poor beggars and poet-musicians yet to be found in the cafés and back alleys of Cairo and Alexandria playing on an instrument held between the knees (not unlike a large square cigar box with one string strung across) to a monotonous sing song or recitation,—leaving aside these problematic relics of dead and buried Eastern music-lore,—the earliest predecessors of our violin virtuosi in mediaeval Europe were the wandering minstrels and strolling players, the *Spielmänner* as they were called in Germany: a poor de-

spised lot, the company of acrobats, punch and judy men and trainers of performing dogs, monkeys, etc., a kind of free community which had grown out of the barbarous conditions prevailing in Europe for several centuries after the great migration of the people. They enjoyed neither the rights of citizenship nor the privilege (then held higher than now) of religious sacraments. Their children were considered illegitimate, were not allowed to learn a trade, and what they left in the way of property was confiscated by the state. Even their hair, we read in an old German law book called the "Sachsenspiegel" the men were at one time compelled to wear short to distinguish them from free born men and women,—a cruel, barbarous restriction for which later violin and piano virtuosi seem to have taken their justifiable revenge by allowing their locks to grow, as a distinguishing feature, to about double the conventional length.

Thus, while their musical antipodes and contemporaries the monks, protected by law and religious sanctity in the comfortable security of their cloisters, wrestled with the theoretical problems of music and laid the foundation of the art of Johann Sebastian Bach, the poor fiddling, blowing, drumming knight errants eked out a precarious living on the high roads. Their audience were the assemblages on a village common, or a knight with his family and friends in a castle court or banquet-hall; or a promiscuous crowd at a fair or market place. Much was expected from them there. If they were able to stand on their head and play with their feet all the better for the attraction and the pennies in the cap.

Their condition and social status began to improve somewhat during the romantic age in the Eleventh and

Twelfth Centuries, the times of the Troubadours and Minnesaenger, when even men of high degree, knights and princes like Richard Coeur de Lion and Karl of Anjou joined the wandering man, preferring a life of freedom and adventure to any other. Fiddlers and flautists, at least the better ones, were then frequently employed to accompany the singing and poetry of these high born troubadours; or they took service with some knight who could afford the luxury of keeping a small band of them to brighten the tedium of daily existence, or with martial strains cheer the heart on marches and in battle.

Accompanying singing seems to have been one of the chief duties of the better professional fiddler after he had emerged from the embryonic stages of music-making in pre-romantic times. This, one should think did not encourage emulation and technical development, apart from the limitations the nature of the instruments imposed on their devotees. For the lauded troubadour fiddle or viol of even the Twelfth or Thirteenth Centuries for instance, (of its sweetness of tone contemporary literature has much to say) must have been a most awkward instrument to handle: imagine a big, guitar-shaped thing hanging, very likely, by a ribbon or string from around the neck in front of the player's breast, so that it covered his chin and reached below his waist, and a curved bow stick of about the same length with which he had to reach around the instrument to bring the hair in contact with the strings, and one gets an idea of the difficulty fiddlers had to contend with. Thus Heinrich Frauenlob a famous Fidelaer and Minnesaenger is depicted playing at what appears to be a tournament of fiddlers, before a king and his queen and an enraptured

audience of nobles and their dames. On another picture another celebrity of the times, Reinmer, the Minnesaenger, who accompanied the Duke Frederick on the Second Crusade and is said to have died in Vienna in 1215, appears to have been left-handed in addition, for he fingers the same monstrosity of an instrument, also suspended from the neck, with his right hand, while he manipulates the bow with the left by apparently stretching and twisting the arm in a manner which would do credit to an acrobat from birth.

Speaking of the bow: most early mediaeval ones when not simply curved sticks with horse hair attached, resembled the present double bass bow and can neither have invited or permitted bowing pyrotechnics although I have heard and seen—it is more a treat for the eye than the ear—a difficult solo performed on the double bass, and the bow in this case jumped about with as much alacrity as the performer. So late as 1533, Hans Gerle in his work "musick teutch" on learning the viol, contents himself with saying on the all important question of bowing: "take the bow in the right hand," in other words, much as you please and "draw it over the strings," while he is quite explicit on fingering and other things. Hans Gerle, by the way, besides being the author of this historical document, is interesting as the chief representative of a family of noted German makers of lutes and viols. Nuremberg where he lived with the great wood carvers of that period and Albrecht Dürer, peer of German painters, was a kind of German Brescia in instrument making.

Notwithstanding the seemingly primitive and awkward character of bowed instruments in mediaeval times and the fact of their being used chiefly to accompany the singing,

we may be fairly certain that not a few of these early fiddlers were clever men in their line, or their names and deeds would scarcely have been perpetuated in songs and pictures.

After the passing of the romantic age in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries the way-faring musicians settled, as already mentioned, in the larger towns which had meanwhile increased in importance, wealth and attractiveness. Life in the town offered surer means of subsistence and a much needed semblance of respectability in the eyes of the law and society. And in proportion as he succeeded after the example of grocers, bakers, tanners and tinsmiths in organizing his fraternity into guilds and unions (that of musicians was called in Germany a Stadtpfeiferei), his social standing and material prospects improved. At the same time his presence and influence stimulated the art and craft of instrument making and this again reacted on his own industry and general usefulness.

So we approach the time of the creation of the violin which was to open up an entirely new field of musical activity and offer undreamt-of scope for technical development.

It is interesting to observe, as showing how slowly news travelled in those days, that Michael Praetorius, a noted German musical writer, does not give an illustration of the violin form in his supposedly exhaustive work on musical instruments the "Syntagma" published 1619, although Andreas Amati and da Salò were then already dead and Paolo Maggini in his prime. Only in his "Theatrum Instrumentorum" published a year later in 1620, at Wolfenbüttel, does the author make good this omission.

Chapter IV

PIONEERS AND PROGRESS

THE invention of the violin was not immediately followed by extraordinary strides in the direction of technic. For half a century or so players on sweet-voiced Amatis and Magginis seemed to have on the whole continued in much the same way as the performers on the treble viol and viola da braccio. Compared to these the new instrument presented considerable difficulty, especially with respect to intonation. For facilitating the latter, the old viols of Gerle's time and later were almost uniformly supplied with frets to mark the places where the fingers stopped the strings, as one sees yet on the mandolin and zither, while on the violin this device was discarded.

For a long time, also, some instruments of the viol family like the viola da gamba and viola d' amour (the latter, played like the arm viol, had no fewer than fourteen strings, seven outside and the same number of sympathetic strings inside)—continued to be used. The English in particular were loath to part with their viols. A chest of viols, as it was called, i.e., a complete set of viols, used to be a common fixture in the homes of the music-loving aristocracy in London; and teachers who taught the viol as well as the violin were to be found until well into the second half of the Eighteenth Century.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the new instrument, notwithstanding its overwhelming superiority, passed

through a certain probationary period during which little is known either of outstanding players or serious attempts at composition.

By the first half of the Seventeenth Century, however, the fame of the violin must have been carried far afield, for we find representations of its perfect Amati and Brescian form in many pictures of the great Dutch painters; and presently also we find Italian violinists in the services of foreign potentates, introducing its novel charms and inviting and stimulating the study of it.

One of the first of these early pioneers was Carlo Farina, born in 1626, engaged as violinist to the Elector of Saxony. His fame rests chiefly on an interesting and amusing opus preserved at the Royal Library in Dresden. It is the manuscript of a collection of old dance tunes originally set for four parts, of which only the solo violin part has survived; and concludes with a quodlibet, entitled "Capriccio Stravaganté."

As something extravagant and extraordinary, indeed, it must have been considered by the composer, for he duly tries to impress this fact on the public in the preface and at the end of the work gives explicit directions as to its rendition, including rules for going into the third position which is twice employed, for playing double stops, the tremolo, the shake, etc., as well as for the proper execution of such rare and attractive feats as the imitating of the drum and fife, the Spanish guitar, dog barking and caterwauling, all contained in this remarkable composition. About the caterwauling he is especially painstaking. He does not state the time and place where the two lovers meet, but he explains how by drawing one finger towards oneself and at the same

time using the bow "as fast as possible now in front of, and now behind the bridge," one can successfully imitate their tender approaches, furious biting and hurried retirement.

Farina's example did not lack imitators in Germany. One Joh. Jacob Walther, likewise in the service of the Elector of Saxony, in his "Hortulus Chelicus" (Pleasure Garden) published in 1694, also discloses how to express on the violin other sweeter voices of the animal kingdom, viz., those of the cuckoo, cock and nightingale, and the cackling of hens. Technically Walther's production shows an advance on Farina's, for besides an excursion into the fifth position it contains a considerable variety of bowings.

For any real, decisive progress, however, in the art of playing and composing for the violin we must once more look to Italy. And the man who notwithstanding the earlier efforts of others has been with good reason called the father of violin playing is Arcangelo Corelli.

It is the particular distinction and greatness of Corelli, by the originality of his genius and his all round musicianship, as well as by his lofty attitude towards his art and a fine sense of proportion for what best suited the instrument,—to have most happily focused in his life work the scattered achievements of his predecessors, (back, if one will, to the mediaeval fiddler) and have crystallized them in a form, a style, both in the direction of playing and composing for the instrument, which could be made the starting point and safe standard for all future progress in the art.

To appreciate this greatness and epoch-making influence of the master compare the crude, tentative efforts in violin composition in pre-Corellian times with the Sonatas and *Concerti a grossi* left by him. Or open the first violin

method extant, published 1740, in London by a pupil of the master, Francesco Geminiani: in it, as laid down by Corelli, with some necessary modifications, will be found the same fundamental rules for holding the violin and bow and for correct playing which are taught our pupils. Or, look up a chronological table showing the descent of violin playing from masters to pupils, and one will see almost every famous violinist past and present linked in some way to the Italian master.

Corelli was born in 1653, at Fusignani not far from Bologna. It is thought that he received his violin instruction from a worthy artist and teacher Giovanni Battista Bassani.* After an early concert tour which took him to Paris and ended in a short term of service with the Duke of Bavaria, he settled in Rome and, remaining there for the rest of his life, founded the Roman School of violin playing.

In Corelli's activity as composer for the violin lies perhaps his first claim to greatness for us who after two hundred years of an astonishing musical development can still admire his works for their simple grandeur and beauty. But as teacher and performer he was scarcely less eminent and deserving of the fame he enjoyed during his life and after death. Pupils came to him from all parts of Italy and beyond, from Germany and France: one of them, Geminiani has already been mentioned as the author of the first Violin Method, a man of conspicuous talent who settled in London; Pietro Locatelli, another pupil, is entitled to a special place in the annals of the violin art by reason of his great influence on the development of technique; a third and Corelli's

*As Corelli was born four years before Bassini it is not clear how the latter could have been his master. (*The Story of the Violin.*)

oldest pupil, Giovanni Battista Somis, born 1676, having also studied for a time in Venice with Vivaldi, another celebrity of the times, and amalgamated the art principles of both masters became the founder of the Piedmontese School at Turin from which eventually sprang one of the greatest violin masters of all time, Viotti.

Through the latter, Somis forms the direct, connecting link between Corelli and our most noted modern players.

There were many more who sought Corelli's instruction, some whose names and deeds are recorded in the musical dictionaries; and others, lesser lights, who remained unknown, who maybe, stayed with the master for a season and then went back to their native place or some new, untilled field of labor as pioneers, carrying in their hearts, heads and fingers the master's message to the world and making new converts to his gentle magic art.

As for Corelli's playing, in the light of later accomplishments on the violin and considering the technically unpretentious nature of his compositions, the unbounded admiration it aroused and which found vent in expressions such as: "Princeps Musicorum," "Maestro di Maestri," "Virtuosissimo di Violino," etc., may seem fantastic.

But it should be realized that violin-playing in his time was yet a comparatively new art, and, further, an easily aroused enthusiasm is not only natural to the Italian temperament but was in his case the reflex of the esteem, amounting to veneration, in which the master was personally held during his more than thirty years sojourn in his chosen city. He was the declared friend of the music-loving, rich and powerful Cardinal Ottoboni in whose palace he lived and at whose famous Monday *Soirées-Musicales* Corelli

invariably led the orchestra and was frequently heard in soli. If he played also at St. Peter's, as there is good reason to believe (the celebrated Sistine Chapel choir was under the charge of his friend the Cardinal) the effect of his violin—he is said to have used a Stradivari—in that most wonderful of churches in Christendom, on many thousands of devoted listeners, rich and poor, must have been impressive to the last degree.

From all accounts his playing was distinguished by a rare beauty and sweetness of tone, and by warmth and nobility of expression rather than any display of technique, as indeed one could imagine from the slow movements in his sonatas and the gentle, modest, unassuming nature of the man. It was not so very surprising under these circumstances that at the master's death his fellow-citizens, desirous of perpetuating his memory in a manner expressive of their sentiments towards him and worthy of his greatness, buried him in the Pantheon, that fine old heathen temple turned into a Christian church. There his remains rest, not far from the ashes of the divine Raphael. At this sacred place a memorial service was held on the anniversary of his death as long as one of his pupils could be found in Rome; and to him fell the honor of conducting a selection of the master's compositions according to the traditions.

Already during Corelli's life time the violin had sung itself into the hearts of the Italian people and much more was this the case after his demise. It became presently the fashion with the well-to-do men and women, to take up its study and compose for it. The Roman Catholic Church, ever ready to enhance the impressiveness of its ritual had

added instrumental music and particularly violin performances to singing as an integral part of its service.

This, while offering congenial and honored employment to many was also a medium not only of further popularizing violin study among all classes but stimulating professional emulation. It became in time a not uncommon practise for soloists to make the precincts of the sacred edifice a convenient arena for fighting out rival claims in the presence of an interested and critical audience.

Under these circumstances it was natural that more or less noted representatives of the art were to be found in all the larger Italian cities, Bologna, Ferrara, Modena, Naples, etc., and particularly Florence, from where came one of the most remarkable of old Italian masters, Francesco Maria Veracini.

Furthermore, regular schools sprang up here and there in which the style characteristics of their founders were promulgated.

In addition to the Roman and Piedmontese Schools and the great School of Padua (to be mentioned later) that of Venice rose to greater importance through the influence of Antonio Vivaldi, that remarkable personage, monk, violinist and fertile composer for whom as a master of musical form, Johann Sebastian Bach showed a marked regard.

It was in Venice, Burney tells us, that four large musical conservatories existed at the time of Vivaldi. They were orphanages, supported by rich Venetians where girls received a musical education, one of these, the Ospitale della Pietà of which Vivaldi was director, was particularly noted for its orchestra. It numbered at one time one hun-

dred and forty girls from among a thousand students and assisted in the production of oratorios etc. in church.

So just at the violin art's high tide of popularity and prosperity in Italy appeared the man who is considered the second great landmark in its development — Giuseppe Tartini.

Chapter V

SOME EARLY MASTERS

NOT many of the world's monuments are erected to famous violin-masters. I know of only three: one at Cassel in honor of Ludwig Spohr, the great composer of the classical-romantic school and a still greater exponent of violin art, and two in honor of Giuseppe Tartini.

One of these latter, stands at Padua among other statues of notable Paduans and men connected with the University of Padua in a shady little park, the Prato della Valle, on the south side of the old town; the other was erected in 1892, on the 200th anniversary of the master's birth at his birthplace Pirano in Istria. Both speak with sufficient eloquence of the veneration in which this master of the violin is held by the Italian people, and for his distinction.

The story of Tartini's early life reads like a romance. Born not far from the blue Adriatic, he was sent as a young man to the University of Padua to study for the law which his parents wished him to follow as a profession. Giuseppe, however, without exactly neglecting these supposedly most important duties, found it more to his liking to work at music. And particularly at the violin, on which he had been instructed as a boy, and also to perfect himself in fencing. In this art he became so proficient that he seriously contemplated giving up the law to become a fencing master at Naples or Paris, when, to crown his youthful indiscretions, he fell in love with a young Paduan lady, who

had been his pupil (whether in fencing, the law or in violin we do not know) and forthwith the young couple proceeded to get married. Then his troubles began. His indignant parents withdrew their support and at the same time the uncle of the bride, a Cardinal, empowered by her family, threatened to prosecute the penniless young husband. To put himself beyond the reach of family revenge Tartini had to leave his bride and flee. It was his intention to go, disguised as a pilgrim to Rome, but after some wanderings through the land he sought and found refuge in a Minorite Cloister at Assisi.

Here in world remoteness after the turmoil of student life and a short, broken dream of happiness, he had time to think over the past and form wholesome resolutions for the future. He again took up his musical studies, progressing so rapidly on the violin that soon he played on Sundays and holy days in the service of the church. On one of these occasions it happened that a relation of his bride heard him and disclosed his whereabouts to her, who had remained faithful and loving. As, according to melodramatic fashion, the wrath of her family and the Cardinal's had in the meantime cooled and made room for reconciliatory proposals, Tartini was persuaded to return to Padua and settle there.

Still, his trials and struggles were not quite at an end. Francesco Maria Veracini, the great Florentine violinist came to Venice, and Tartini was prevailed upon by well-meaning, overzealous friends to challenge him in open combat. Veracini's wonderful playing so affected his young rival that without so much as crossing swords with him, he withdrew quietly from the field of battle, left his wife and

home and, though then a man of twenty-four, retired to a cloister at Ancona for renewed study, particularly in bowing, in which he had felt Veracini's superiority most.

When after a year he emerged from this study and returned to Padua he had reached his artistic goal. Henceforth his path ran smoothly. A position worthy of his talent was offered him 1728, at the beautiful Church of St. Anthony which then employed no less than eighteen singers and twenty-four instrumentalists; and with the exception of a three years stay at Prague, where he had been invited to assist in the crowning ceremonies of the Emperor Charles VI, he remained at Padua for the rest of his days. Resisting the most flattering and lucrative offers from abroad (one for three thousand pounds sterling to come to England), he was content to stay at the salary said to have been four hundred Louis d'or, content to play his regular solo at the church, even when declining years and a painful foot (which eventually was the cause of his death) made difficult the performance of this sacred duty, to compose and teach—and content, perhaps, to die after a long life filled with honors. His death occured on February 26th, 1770, the year of Beethoven's birth. He was buried in the Church of Santa Caterina at Padua.

This then is the compressed story of Tartini's life. The broadly human and dramatic incidents in it have helped to cast an additional abiding charm for young and old around the personality of this old master such as, with the exception of Paganini, no other famous violinist can claim.

Before speaking of Tartini's life work, in order that its influence on the progress of violin playing may be viewed in a truer perspective in relation to allied contemporary as-

piration, I should like to preface that a little more than a generation after Corelli's death or about the middle of the Eighteenth Century it began to change, that is, it entered on a new phase or aspect of its development. Or perhaps I should rather say it branched out in a new direction like a river dividing itself into two arms which run together, sometimes approaching, sometimes diverging far apart until, nearing their goal, they almost merge into one again. The main stream flowing nobly along in its broad bed of traditions may be said to represent the development of violin-playing on strictly musical lines of which Viotti and Spohr formed the creative culmination; the side issue may be said to represent the development of the art on purely technical lines, or on the side of technic for its own ends; in other words, to represent virtuosity *per se* which culminated in Paganini.

Until the middle of the Eighteenth Century violin technique had been on the whole subservient to higher musical ends. The great representatives of the art, Corelli, Vivaldi, Veracini, Tartini and many others were *bona fide* musicians before they were executants, or their creative and executive abilities were fairly evenly balanced.

The very fact that many of them stood in the service of the church checked any extravagant exploits in the way of execution, which would have been unsuited to the holy place and office.

But a younger generation of players had begun to discover till then unknown or discarded possibilities of finger board and bow; and these discoveries in the way of the higher positions, of octaves, tenths, staccato, *sautillé*, etc., were no sooner made than the old church dependence also

proved irksome. The young full-fledged technician longed to try his new and startling devices before other, more loudly appreciative audiences than the accustomed reserved church and private assemblies at home; he sought for a better market for the new musical wares he had to offer. The many small courts in Germany, which a century before had attracted a generation of pioneers of the fiddle, England and the pleasure-loving, licentious courts of Paris and St. Petersburg all held out a welcoming hand to him and promises of gold and fame. Thus virtuosity for its own ends was fairly launched on its path, lined with glittering but fast-fading glories.

The initial steps in new lines of progress are usually taken by a single individual. One man has with good reason been called the grandsire of violin virtuosity on account of the great share he had in the development of technique.

This was Pietro Locatelli, already mentioned as a pupil of Corelli. Unusual technical facilities on the violin and corresponding proclivities show themselves as a rule in early youth, and one can just imagine young Locatelli blessed with one of those left hands which nature seems to have specially created for the violin, a hand, long, strong and flexible to which nothing in the way of technical difficulty is impossible, a hand which would go romping over the finger board in and out of lesson time, now trying a game of octaves or tenths, now seeking the vicinity of the bridge to the dismay of his conservative master. At all events, if not by personal example (although Locatelli toured before he settled in Amsterdam where he was highly appreciated and died), he must have done mischief among

the younger fiddlers of his time and after through a work which he published under the title of "L' Arte del Violino," XII Concerti with twenty-four Capriccia *ad libitum*. To play these caprices now makes one marvel how they could have been penned, by one of Corelli's own pupils only a few years after the older master's death. In more than one may be traced the origin of certain features of Paganini's technique.

One of the first to solve Locatelli's technical conundrums, to carry a (till then presumably) book and studio virtuosity into practise and thus open the long and stately *cortège* of violin virtuosi was the self-taught, Antonio Lolli.

We first hear of him as having been engaged in 1762 in the service of the Duke of Württemberg. Schubart, the unhappy poet of Franz Schubert's "Trout" song to whose eloquent pen we are indebted for many valuable criticisms on famous violinists of the Eighteenth Century heard Lolli at that time and writes of his extraordinary way of playing the violin:

> "He, (Lolli) in his playing not only unites the perfection of the Tartini and Ferrari Schools but has found yet an entirely new way. His bowing is never to be imitated (*ewig unnachahmlich*). One thought hitherto quick passages could only be expressed by a short kind of stroke; he, however, draws the whole bow as long as it is over the strings, and by the time he gets to the point the hearer has already been treated to a perfect hailstorm of tones. Besides that, he has art of drawing from his violin tones never heard before.—His velocity borders on witchery. Not only does he execute octaves but tenths with the greatest finesse and trills in thirds as well as sixths and sails in the dizziest heights of tones so that he often finishes his piece with a tone which seems to be the non plus ultra of tones."

And on another occasion Schubart writes: "The greatest vir-

tuoso of all I ever heard, the greatest was Lolli, the ever unapproachable." Other reports voice the same impression which Lolli's new and astonishing art made on the musical world of his day.

His engagement in Stuttgart having terminated in 1773, he accepted the proposition made him by Catherine II to come to St. Petersburg. Here he not only created a sensation with his playing but is said to have enjoyed the special, personal favor of the great queen. This would not be so very surprising as Catherine had, it is well known, elastic heart strings, and Lolli was not only a very handsome and amiable man, but trod the slippery parquet in king's and queen's palaces with the ease of a courtier. He also lived up to his reputation and his income which is reported to have been four thousand roubles. He kept his carriage and horses and a valet and went about decked with precious jewels. After three years at the Russian capital he suddenly left and appeared in Paris with sensational success. And thenceforth he lived the restless, homeless life of the true travelling virtuoso, staying nowhere long. Seventeen hundred and eighty-four found him in Spain, the beginning of the next year in London; and between 1785 and 1796 he was heard repeatedly in Italy, Berlin, Copenhagen, Palermo, Vienna and Naples. Considering that those were the old coaching days, such touring is amazing. In 1802 his restless ever changing life came to an end in Palermo at about the age of seventy. His mortal remains were interred in the Church of the Capucine Monks a little outside the city.

Lolli left two pupils noted in their day, Giornovichi (Jarnowick) a Dalmatian, and Woldemar; but what is of greater significance for us and gives Lolli his distinct and

assured place in the history of violin playing is the fact that he was the first of his kind (the forerunner of Paganini) and his example and success inspired many other violinists to follow in his footsteps.

While their aims and ideals may be open to discussion, it cannot be denied that they had not only a preponderating share in the development of violin technics (that veritable hailstorm of tones in one bow, mentioned by Schubart, is explicit enough); but, a point often overlooked, they carried the art and the love for it into spheres which in all probability would not have been so easily reached by the player of more conservative, classical tendencies. The men who subsequently, violin in hand, journeyed around the world, who sought new fields of musical conquest across the seas and who began visiting these shores when the pioneer had barely made way for them, are they not rightly to be considered successors of Lolli rather than of Somis, Vivaldi and Tartini?

The uncompromising historian has been in the habit of frowning upon Lolli, on account of his undeniable contrapuntal deficiencies. But it should be remembered that he was in a sense a victim of his early autodidactic upbringing. Having once made the exploitation of technic his chief aim, he could no more stop himself than a carriage going down hill at full speed. Moreover he lived in a time, very different from ours, when it was expected of a great player to play his own compositions. And who would cast a first stone at the amazing technician who (although a composer in his own fashion, for Lolli published a number of works) failed to be at the same time a Tartini or Vivaldi? Many a lauded performer of the Mendelssohn Concerto to-day

might find himself in a worse plight than Lolli, if measured by this standard. He felt his musicianly shortcomings keenly. Once hearing a famous German violinist, Franz Benda, who was noted for his Adagio playing, perform a slow movement most beautifully and feelingly, Lolli is said to have burst into tears, exclaiming: "If I could play like that, but, alas, I must be too much of the harlequin to amuse the world."

A sad, if modest, admission by one as famous and admired as he was. But it carries its lesson for those with talent who think technic on the violin, and as much as possible of it, the only thing worth having and worth showing, when, without losing sight of its indispensability for the artist, it should nevertheless be regarded and used soberly and rightly, as only a means for higher ends.

This was Tartini's view to whom we now return. Once on being asked how he liked a certain violinist who paraded his brilliant technic, he answered, " that is fine, that is difficult, but here—(laying his hand on his heart) it has told me nothing."

Perhaps what is most generally known of Tartini, is his dream of the devil's trill, but I think it will bear repetition:

> "One night" relates the master himself, "it was in the year 1713, I dreamt I had sold my soul to the devil. Everything was at my command; my new servant anticipated every one of my wishes. Among other ideas, it occurred to me also to give him my violin, to see if he would be able to play something good on it. But how great was my surprise when I heard a Sonata, so wonderful, so beautiful and rendered with so much art and intelligence that not the highest flight of fantasy could have hoped to reach it. I was so entranced, delighted, enchanted, that the breath failed me and I awoke. Immediately I seized my violin in order to retain at least a portion of the tones heard in my dream. In vain! Al-

> though the music I composed then is the best I ever made in my life and I call it yet the devil's sonata, the difference between it and the other which so moved me is so great that I would have broken my instrument and renounced music forever, if I had been able to deprive myself of the pleasure it affords me."

It is told that Tartini had the manuscript of the devil's sonata hanging opposite the door of his study as a memento of this extraordinary experience. For one thing, however we wish to interpret its dream-origin, this fine work, still a favorite with violinists, represents the key to one side of the master's character from which his creative genius largely drew, namely, a blend of mysticism and devotion. In keeping with it, he liked to put mottoes in self-invented hieroglyphic writing over the different movements of his compositions and verses of his favorite poets under the violin parts; and also, before composing he read a poem of Petrarch, or some other poem, to give his fancy a distinct direction.

Tartini was really a great man from which ever side we wish to consider his activity and influence, as composer for his instrument, as executant, teacher or simply as a man. His intellectual powers were of rare grasp and penetration, whether they set themselves, as at Ancona, to the task of trying to reduce the difficulties of bowing and intonation on the violin to mathematical and physiological laws, or occupied themselves, in scientific works, with acoustical problems which only a hundred years later were to be solved by Helmholtz. With this fine intellect and an untiring industry went, as his unfailing source of inspiration, equally fine imaginative qualities and, matching these, qualities of the heart,—a simplicity, modesty, *noblesse* and sweetness of character which, while desirable in any true artist are in-

dispensable in the man who would also be a truly great teacher and educator of mankind.

His productivity as composer is amazing. Only a small portion of the works credited to him, and they are quite a stately number, seem to have been printed in his life time or since. In his sonatas which for several decades stood as the unassailable norm for this kind of composition, he improved on the Corelli sonata by giving them greater breadth, harmonic and rhythmic variety of detail, as well as more individuality of expression. With this fertility as composer he found time to distinguish himself also as an author.

Several voluminous treatises* on scientific subjects arrested the attention and brought him into lively correspondence with eminent scholars of the day. In addition he was an interested student of philosophy, astronomy and kindred sciences. He even set his keen brain to improving the violin bow by giving it greater length and a slightly different curve, thereby enhancing its elastic qualities and making it better suited for the many new bowing varieties he had introduced.**

His playing elicited profound admiration from his contemporaries, especially his mastery of the bow. The out-

*In one he tries to explain the phenomenon of the so-called differential tone produced by sounding double-stops on the violin providing they are absolutely in tune.

**The unsurpassable ideal of the violin bow as we now possess it, was realized only a generation or two later by François Tourte, born 1747 in Paris, at the suggestion, it is said, of Viotti who introduced the Tourte bow first. Both the Corelli and Tartini bow had the old so-called *cremailliere* instead of the ferule to regulate the tension of the hair. It was a band of metal divided into notches: a movable top of iron or brass wire attached to the nut, served to catch the nut to one of the notches. (The Author's "Story of the Violin".)

come of his studies in this respect were embodied by him, for the benefit of his pupils, in his "Arte del arco," a set of fifty variations on a theme by Corelli, and also in an interesting account given by Fayolle on how the master divided and marked the bow stick into minute portions.

As a teacher, finally, his influence may be said to have been almost the greatest and farthest reaching. The proud epithet which his contemporaries gave him, of *Maestro delle Nazione* was in more than one sense deserved; for not only did pupils come to him in large numbers from Germany and France as well as from his own country, but, as in Corelli's case, they in their turn spread his precepts in all directions.

As a teacher also the sympathetic human side of his personality, besides the artistic one, found vent and must have left its encouraging, inspiring, transforming effect on those who enjoyed his instruction.

The most noted of his pupils, Pietro Nardini, the master's favorite, who nursed him in his last illness, lives in the grateful memory of posterity by a number of charming and much played compositions.

Dominico Ferrari, a celebrity in his day, was one of the first to explore (after he had left Tartini) the realm of harmonics, till then almost unknown.

Of Tartini's French pupils, Pierre Lahoussay and Pagin distinguished themselves; of Germans, Joh. Gottlieb Graun, Kammel and Holzbogen. Finally an Italian, Gaetano Pugnani, who studied with Somis* in Turin, became an important figure in the progress of art.

*Another famous pupil of Somis may here be mentioned, that is, Jean Marie Leclair, who as composer for the violin stands in the front rank of French violinists. Born 1697, he was murdered in the streets of Paris in 1764.

Chapter VI

VIOTTI

TARTINI was dead. On whose shoulders was his mantle to fall? No shoulders of living famous violinists seemed broad enough for it. None of the master's many pupils, however talented, had his genius to carry violin art further. Was it to stand still, and for how long? For a few years, there was in a sense no real progress though the pace of progress in its widest sense is never set by a single man alone.

But the prophet was already born; he was a youth of seventeen when the aged Paduan master passed away. He was imbibing the latter's precepts, learning his lessons and firing and steeling his soul for a still higher flight. The youth's name was Giovanni Battista Viotti and his guide and teacher, Pugnani.

Musical prodigies have become common in our day, and in consequence they are discredited and viewed with suspicion. They are, nevertheless, a wonderful psychological fact, not easily explained away by natural reasons, such as favorable musical surroundings, good teaching, etc. These favorable circumstances may have a great influence in bringing talent to a just and early fruition, but as one single seedling will push its way through the hard soil before its brothers and sisters to get the light of the sun, so the inherent gifts of the prodigy seem to press forward mysteriously, for no tangible reason, to an earlier consummation than they do in other mortals.

Like a foreshadowing of the important rôle the man Viotti was to play in the world of music, as though mother Nature had wished to be early at her work of developing the rare gifts she had stored up in the child, Giovanni Battista presents one of the most striking examples of precocity in the annals of our art. Unlike Corelli and Tartini, who had reached years of discretion before their genius came to maturity, Viotti sprang, as it were, into the world in the full armor of genius, amidst surroundings which in the accepted sense were anything but propitious.

On May 23rd, 1753, just one hundred years after Corelli's birth, there was born to the blacksmith of a small Italian village, Fontanetto, a son, whom he and his wife called, as many little Italian boys are called, Giovanni Battista (John Baptist). The father played the horn and had some slight general knowledge of music, for when Giovanni very early showed a love for it, the honest shoer of horses undertook to teach his child. We do not know at what age the little boy got his first toy fiddle, but when Giovanni Battista made up his mind as to the choice of this instrument his progress on it, with the help of an itinerent lute-player who gave him lessons for six months, was so rapid that on one occasion, on being taken by his father to a church fair at Strambino, he attracted general attention by his playing, and in particular the attention and interest of a worthy prelate of the town, Rocca by name, who gave him a letter to the Marchesa di Borghera at Turin.

So one fine day, the little country lad with beating heart, mounted the broad stairs of the elegant *Palazzo Borghera* and was ushered into the lady's presence. And this is what happened: Among the guests was a member of the

Royal Chapel orchestra, Colognetti, who at once insisted on hearing the boy. A violin sonata by some Italian composer was placed before him. Giovanni Battista played it at sight with the assurance and ease of a full fledged musician. Praised for this feat the boy answered in his provincial dialect: "That is a mere nothing."

This sounded arrogant for one so young and to make the little fellow more modest a difficult sonata by Ferrari was brought and put before him. Giovanni mastered it like the first. His patrons would not let this young prodigy out of their sight.

"Do you know the theatre?" Colognetti asked him.

"No, Sir," replied the boy.

"So, you have no idea of it? Come then, I will take you to it."

As soon as the lad found himself in the orchestra, he sat among the violinists and played through a whole opera as though he had studied and rehearsed it with the rest. After his return to the *palazzo*, on being asked what had particularly attracted his attention, he played, by way of an answer, various parts of the music to the increased surprise and delight of his host and their friends. Thereupon the son of the Marchesa, who in his memoirs relates this incident, decided to provide for the education and future of the child.

"I was" he relates, "so entranced by the exhibition of this natural talent that I resolved to do everything in my power not to leave such gifts undeveloped. I made him live in my palace and gave him Pugnani for a teacher. Viotti's education costs me more than 20,000 francs, but I

do not begrudge the money. The existence of such an artist could not have been paid for too highly."

So Giovanni Battista studied with Pugnani in Turin; and when in company of his master he undertook his first concert tour in the spring of 1780 through Germany, Poland and Russia he was acclaimed the greatest violinist of the day, or for that matter, the greatest who had ever appeared; the public has always had a short memory. But in his case it was so. The musical world was hardly prepared for playing such as his, so novel, so daring, so grand, so consummately masterly from every point of view. Even the form in which he introduced his art, that of the concerto with full orchestra was new; it was his own, created on the basis principally of the Vivaldi and Haydn efforts in that direction. The old church sonata was temporarily forgotten and discredited by it, and indeed has never been resuscitated except in more recent days when the sterility of composers for the violin again drew the attention of players to the treasures in that obsolete form left by the old masters.

The enthusiasm Viotti aroused was almost everywhere the same, or it marked a crescendo and climax as, after leaving the Russian capital, where Catherine II vainly tried to hold him, he reached Paris. The effect of the master's playing here of his Concerto No. 22 in A minor, perhaps the most beautiful he wrote and one of the most inspired works in violin literature, is said to have been indescribable. For a number of years he, subsequently, made Paris his home and by his playing and teaching exercised an enormous influence on the younger generation of violinists. It was an influence to be compared only in far reaching magnitude, in spite of altered conditions, to that of his two great pre-

decessors, Corelli and Tartini; for although the French School benefited from it in the first place, it soon spread all over violin playing Europe, marking the beginning of the modern phases of the art and the third and last great milestone in its development.

Of Viotti's pupils, the names of Pierre Rode, through the master's concertos and twenty-four caprices, has become a violinistic household word, by the side of Rudolf Kreutzer of "Forty Etudes" fame, who though not a direct pupil of Viotti took him for his life-long, shining model. Others like Jean Baptiste Cartier, Philippe Libon, André Robberchts (the teacher of de Bériot) Frederic Durand and the once feted lady violinist Parravacini are less known.

Viotti's later life was unfortunately not so happy as the brilliant constellations in his youth and earlier manhood and his incomparable talents seemed to warrant. He was persuaded to undertake at a critical time, i.e., shortly before the great French revolution, the direction of the Paris Grand Opéra. The failure of this enterprise cost him his whole hard earned fortune, and fleeing from the revolutionary upheavals in his adopted country he landed one day, a poor man, in London.

Compelled by necessity to break a vow, made a few years previously under some provocation, to play no more in public, he threw himself once more into the maelstrom of concert life. But his bright star had begun to sink. Under suspicion of political conspiracy which later proved unfounded and which may have been due to the friendship of the Duke of Orléans, he was advised to leave England. A friend offered him his country house near Hamburg for a refuge, and there he stayed until 1795, devoting his enforced

leisure to the composition of his charming duets for two violins.

When he was allowed to return to London he had lost all inclination to renew the struggle for public favor. And saddened by misfortune, with the elasticity of youth gone, and for want of regular occupation he became, to the amazement and chagrin of his friends and admirers, a wine merchant.

Once more in 1818, he allowed himself to be allured to Paris by the offer, a second time, of the directorship of the Opéra; and during this visit he played for the last time in public on the occasion of a great ovation given him by the teachers and pupils of the Conservatoire. His efforts to put into order the mismanaged operatic institution failed, he was forced to resign and with a pension of 6000 francs, all he had after this second wrecking of his hopes, he returned to London. Here he died two years later on May 10th, 1824, a disappointed, sad and lonely man.

By a strange irony of fate, not even his grave can be found.

Viotti was perhaps the greatest master of the violin of the classical school and composer for his instrument the world has seen. His fame has not paled although in the irresistible onward march of time, most of his concertos with which he transported his audiences into ecstacy are now relegated to the patient four walls of the conservatory to be played by pupils.

His personality has been sympathetically described by his biographers: "Seldom genius" writes Pougin, "selected a worthier dwelling place. His figure and bearing were distinguished, his manner refined, his face open, expressive and

almost always smiling, his heart kind and generous and his mind in sympathy with, and open to everything that is true, noble and beautiful in art and in nature; well read, intelligent, witty and yet as naive as a child—such was Viotti, favorite of the muses."

Viotti is the last great contribution to violin art from Italy, the land of its birth and much of its glory—except, yes—once more this glory rose to a short but undreamed of splendor in the man, to whom we come next — Nicolo Paganini.

Chapter VII

PAGANINI

PAGANINI!

There are few men living now, if any, who have heard Paganini. I knew an old gentleman in London who had that privilege in his youth and who described to me in glowing words, this man of over eighty, the unforgettable impression he received on that night, so many years ago, when he sat in the audience that filled the theatre at Derby to overflowing, listening with bated breath to that wonderman of the fiddle, a tall, lank figure clothed in black, a pale, thin face with two deep set eyes sparkling like black diamonds, long, wild black hair and long arm and long hands —an apparition come and gone, and between the coming and the going a short eternity of sound, a world of experiences, a thousand and one night's dream and awakening.

Or as Robert Schumann, having expressly travelled from Heidelberg to Frankfort to hear Paganini, records the experience in his diary with these few poignant words: "In the evening Paganini—enchantment (was it not so?) far away music and bliss in bed."

When visiting Genoa do not fail to go to the Municipio and ask to be shown *il violino di Paganini.* The official guide will take you to the upper floor of the building and through the Council Chamber, where he will show you with pride the portrait figure of Columbus, that other great immortal son of the city, executed in mosaic. And in the

adjoining room, near the window, a door, indistinguishable from the white and gold embossed wall paper, opens into a small, blue, satin-lined recess in the wall and there before you in a cylindrical glass case hangs suspended that silent miracle: the violin of Paganini.

And when you have feasted your eyes on the sight of the red-brown glossy prisoner — in which, it was recently discovered that the worm is slowly but surely doing its destructive work like a relentless evil spirit, and which is, therefore, doomed unless released and used again—when you have thought all sorts of curious thoughts (and perhaps the wicked one—if you could only snatch it and run off with it!)—and the official has calmly closed the little door again, much too soon for your desires—ask the way to the *Casa di Paganini.* Any loiterer in the street will direct you, until after some wandering, you find yourself in a narrow little street not far from the harbor, and presently in front of an unprepossessing, three-floor stone house, painted pink (when I saw it) with green Venetian shutters. This is *la casa di Paganini* as you will see by the marble tablet bearing this inscription:

> "On the 27th day of October of the year 1782 was born to the pride of Genoa and the delight of the world, Nicolo Paganini, the unsurpassed master in the divine art of tones."

Above the tablet is a handsome shrine to the Madonna executed in stone. In this house, on the third floor consisting of three small rooms, one with two windows facing the street, the other the harbor, and the third, a mere passage between them, the great virtuoso first saw the light of this world, and here Nicolo grew up. Another prodigy who found almost unaided a way where masters tread with care

and, for their pupils use charted maps of rules of do's and don't's! A certain Servetto is credited with having helped young Nicolo in his first studies, but like Lolli, the boy must have accomplished almost everything himself.

If ever any one was self-taught it was Paganini. His was not any master's or blend of several masters' style; it was his own from the beginning. What he may have learned of others was only like a small, ingrafted branch, a little food quickly absorbed by his overwhelming originality. I am not referring to the wonderful technical feats with which he astonished the world, the *pizzicato* and *col arco, staccato à ricochet* and double stopped harmonics, etc.; they were the tortuous work of later years. I mean the style which served for a basis for this astounding technical fabric, which was made to bear the monstrous pile.

Some features of Paganini's bowing, here primarily concerned, have been recorded by Guhr who wrote a small book on Paganini's art of playing the violin. His forearm is said to have been so long that he was able to reach the strings with the nut of the bow without, or scarcely, moving the upper arm. As this would reduce the comparatively heavy and awkward co-operation of this part of the arm in the stroke to a minimum it must have enormously increased the freedom of movement and the efficiency of the forearm and wrist.

Of course his fingers were of exceptional length and flexibility; large difficult stretches for the left hand apparently did not exist for him, which accounts for his facility in executing in almost any tempo tenths, skips and also double harmonics and *pizzicato* accompaniments in the left hand. All these things are nevertheless only details of an

unique natural technical predisposition such as Locatelli and others may have possessed, too, if to a lesser degree.

Behind it was the iron will which forced this wrist and forearm, these fingers, tyrants as they are for other people, into subjection, made then unfaltering, unfailing and obedient servants; and behind it also genius, an abundant originality to invent work for them, artistic forms into which they could be tamed and yet run wild. For Paganini was not only a technician, the most marvellous that ever lived, he was much more. In a sense even his technique served him for higher ends—an ideal if you will, however far removed from that of the great classical masters, call it the realization of a demoniacal power over his fellow men, a power by the tones of his violin to move, touch, sway, thrill, madden the souls of men and women. His *cantilena* was as great and wonderful in its way as his technical *tours de force*, and many of his compositions show beside blatant trivialities, ideas of arresting originality and beauty.

But to follow Paganini in the making: His public career must be said to have begun at the age of twelve, when he appeared at the principal theatre of Genoa with a set of variations of his own invention. The effect of the boy's playing was such that his father, who kept a small shop near the harbor, was prevailed upon to give the musical education of his son into the hands of trusted masters. Accordingly he took Nicolo to Alessandro Rolla at Parma, a violinist of considerable and deserved reputation. Paganini has himself described this visit in a Viennese journal:

> "When we arrived" he narrates "at Rolla's house we found him ill in bed. His wife showed us into an apartment adjoining the bedroom while she went to speak to her husband, who seemed little inclined to receive us. I

had no sooner seen on the table in the room where we were, a violin and the newest of his concertos than I seized the instrument and played the piece at sight. Surprised at this the composer enquired for the name of the virtuoso whom he had just heard and on being told that it was a boy, he would not believe it, until he had personally convinced himself of the fact. He then told me that he could teach me nothing and gave me the advice to study composition with Paër."

Nevertheless Nicolo studied for a few months with Rolla, taking it is told, three lessons a week, and lessons in composition from Ghiretti at Parma. After this, (the sole short apprenticeship he ever had and during which the conservative master had more than one battle with the self-asserting originality of the pupil) began for Paganini, still a boy, the titanic struggles for the realization of his dreams and ambitions.

We can only dimly imagine them. They meant not only mastering every possible difficulty on the violin then known, but discovering new ones, greater ones, colossal ones and by thousands of repetitions reducing them to mere child's play. They meant the invention of new combinations to accommodate these difficulties; in short, the straining of every physical and mental fibre day after day, week after week for months and years.

It is related that in those years Paganini practised ten to twelve hours a day, never stopping until he sank down exhausted. He must have had, to begin with, a physical and nervous constitution as wiry and strong as his will not to succumb to this strain. It made indeed all future practise, as he himself affirmed, unnecessary, for he never touched his violin during his tours except when playing at concerts; but he paid the price for thus outraging the laws of nature

just at the critical period of adolescence and for the reactionary indulgence and excesses which presently followed an unnatural, self-imposed asceticism, with a body half wrecked and ruined and subject all his life to attacks of illness, spleen and misanthropy.

His ambition, however, at the end of several years of such Herculean labor was realized. When he again appeared before the public on a first concert tour undertaken in 1801 through northern and central Italy, his native land discovered its Paganini. No words can describe adequately the sensation he created. His technical mastery was then so complete, that he was able to play any composition of another composer at first sight in public, a feat which secured for him, thus early in his career, his subsequent favorite violin, his "cannon" as a present from, or some say, as the result of a wager with a rich Livorno merchant who was its former possessor.

Then suddenly he disappeared. For some inexplicable reason (it may have been reaction after one-sided work carried to extreme) he cast aside the violin and devoted himself for four years, near the country seat of a lady who had inspired his tender passion, to the study of the guitar. This rather unworthy substitute for the kingly instrument he is said to have mastered to a not less fabulous degree of perfection.

In 1805 he again appeared before the public with his violin, on the occasion of a nocturnal church festival at Lucca, when the enthusiasm of the assembled congregation rose to such a pitch that the officiating monks had to leave their places to calm the frenzied demonstrations. This led to a three years' engagement at the Lucca court as solo

violinist and teacher of the young prince, during which time he still worked on the perfecting of certain sides of his technique, particularly playing on one string, afterwards in the famous variations on the G string on a theme by Rossini, one of his unfailing *tours de force.*

He has himself told the connecting circumstances. By way of a little *galanterie musicale* to one of the ladies of the court who, he thought, reciprocated his passionate feelings for her, he promised her and announced at court, a novelty under the title of a love scene. To the astonishment of the audience he appeared with but two strings on his violin, the E and G., one expressing the sentiments of the young lady, the other, the G string, those of her lover, he performed a kind of tender, sentimental dialogue and duet descriptive of the whole scale of love, jealousy, rage, joy, pain and bliss, and ending of course with a reconciliation, a *passo a due* (two step) and brilliant coda. This scene found favor with the audience and the lady of his heart. "The Princess Elise" Paganini narrates, "after making me the greatest compliments remarked with much grace: you have accomplished the impossible on two strings, would one alone not suffice for your talent? I promised to make the attempt. The idea excited my imagination and after a few weeks I composed for the G string a sonata which under the title "Napoleone" I performed in the presence of a brilliant and large court assembly on the 26th of August. The success far exceeded my expectation and with that day began my predilection for the G string."

After the termination of his Lucca engagement Paganini continued a sort of hide and seek existence, living at various Italian cities and now appearing in public with electrifying

success, now completely disappearing for reasons unknown or because ill health imposed upon him a longer or shorter retirement. One such severe illness, wrongly treated by a famous physician nearly caused his death.

To the age of forty-six the great virtuoso had never travelled beyond his native land. In the year 1828, however, yielding to a repeated invitation of the Count Metternich he made his first appearance in Vienna.

It was the beginning of a tour of triumphs such as have fallen to the lot of no other executive artist within man's memory. People went Paganini-mad, a malady the symptoms of which I must leave to your own imagination, for the known superlatives of enthusiasm cannot even faintly convey the impression this extraordinary man made by his art and personality. The wonderful stories which had gathered around the grotesquely suggestive figure on the stage invested it with an additional sensational charm, and the more incredible they were the more they excited the imagination. He was not only the consummation of everything and beyond everything the popular mind could conceive of uncanny perfection on four strings, but he seemed like a creation of the accumulated experiences of centuries, the incarnation of the very life of the fiddle as the fancy of poets, painters and dreamers had pictured to them, and of the fiddler whom mediaeval superstition thought in league with the devil.

After passing through the principal cities of Germany, Paganini reached Paris in March, 1831 and in the same year London. By the end of these travels in 1834 he had amassed a large fortune, but his already shattered constitution was also near a complete collapse. He sought rest at

a villa near Parma forming part of an extensive land property that he had purchased with some of the proceeds of his tours; and except for one concert at Piacenza at which he gave his services for the benefit of the poor, he remained in retirement for the rest of his life. His death after a protracted illness, occurred at Nice on May 27th, 1840.

As his painful end had deprived him of receiving the last Unction his mortal body lay embalmed for several years, awaiting burial in a room on the ground floor of his villa until, after long negotiations, by a special dispensation from Rome it could be interred in consecrated ground in the park of his villa at Parma. A sad but strangely significant finale to a strange and extraordinary life!

The character of this greatest of virtuosi seems almost as enigmatic as his art. It presents a curious mixture of what appears now in the long perspective of time like small traits and superior qualities of the mind, a semi-caricature of mental as much as physical idiosyncrasies, true genius with a little of the charlatan thrown in, knowing the effect of advertising on box-office receipts. The accusation that he was avaricious can hardly be brought against him in the face of numerous examples of benevolence. He charged high prices for his concerts and for his services; but in this he was justified, as he was also in his answer to an offer of King George III to play for half the sum of a hundred pounds sterling demanded by him for playing at a court concert: "His majesty can hear me for a considerably lower price in my concert at the theatre."

The well known writer and theorist A. B. Marks relates in his memoirs how, after having been deeply moved at Paganini's concert in Berlin he "met the strange man at

Mendelssohn's at the family table. He was quiet and very kindly; nothing would have led the stranger to imagine anything fantastic, not to mention anything uncanny about him. And yet the first impression remained. The man seemed like one bewitched and made this effect not on me alone or on this or that one—but on everybody."

Paganini's influence on contemporary violin art was naturally tremendous; it could hardly have been otherwise. Still, it may be said to have been and to be to this day, psychological rather than in the nature of real progress or permanent enrichment of the art, as the great classical masters are rightly credited with. He stimulated technical emulation, yes, to a degree unknown before him; but who could conscientiously confound this with true artistic progress, or call it a blessing to succeeding generations of players? It has ever since forced on them an iron master's hand.

Even Paganini's contributions to technique, however startling and alluring at the time, remained more or less confined to the rendering of his own compositions. The limited and questionable use of a few immediate followers and imitators, particularly among French violinists, made of them in their compositions can scarcely be considered as of any weight or consequence in the light of progress. A number of Paganini's works are still among the effective stock-in-trade of some of our qualified virtuosi, and this fact speaks well enough for the genius of the composer; for the rest, while time will go on weaving stories, laurel wreaths and immortelles around his memory — the violin world after having been stirred to its depths by his meteoric appearance, is pursuing its way.

Chapter VIII

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT OF VIOLIN ART

WE have so far considered the history of violin playing chiefly as embodied in the life and work of a few great outstanding personalities. Let us now gather up some loose ends of threads left hanging for the purpose of working them into the canvas which is to show the general development of violin art to our day through and around these great central figures.

A subject here that looms up considerably, especially in the earlier stages, is that of schools. We have seen that already in the long evolutionary process preceding the appearance of Corelli the violin was carried from its cradle, Italy, across the Alps to Germany and France and further north and east and west; and although few names of prominent violinists of that period have come down to us and scanty is the information to be gleaned from their compositions as to the way they played, their example must have inspired many everywhere with the wish to follow it and master the new instrument.

When with Corelli this apprenticeship of about a hundred years ended and violin art entered in real earnest on its career, the early struggles for expression having formed themselves into definite rules and principles, it is not surprising to find schools springing up not only in Italy but elsewhere in which these principles were guarded and promulgated. The founders of these nurseries of violin art

beyond Italy's borders may have been in the majority Italians or have studied in Italy with this or that celebrity, but national and personal traits blended with received traditions would soon have given to each school more or less its own individual stamp. It is thus that we are able to explain to ourselves the characteristic similarities and divergencies of style which to a certain extent are to this day noticeable in the playing of violinists of different schools.

The elastic, elegant Italian mind which at the sunset of the Renaissance, under an azure sky, after a feast of wonderous art creations had given to the world this matchless instrument, the violin itself, would also, it seems natural to presume, have found most quickly the essential conditions for revealing to the fullest its tonal beauty, and have sought satisfaction in the cultivation of the violin for its own sake. To the German who had only received his message of the Renaissance through northern gloom, through Dürer and not Raphael, who scarcely had recovered from the Thirty Years' War, who, hemmed in and fettered by city guilds, trade unions and *Stadtpfeifereien*, looked to Buxtehude and the predecessors of Johann Sebastian Bach for his musical ideals, for strength and character more than for beauty—to the German violinist the violin would have been primarily a vehicle for musical expression as such; how it was handled, whether in outlines of symmetry and beauty or not, would have mattered only in a secondary way. A loud tone would have been preferable to a beautiful one, a broad stroke to a scintillating one, breadth to style and elegance.

Thus we can see various influences at work in violinistic evolution in spite of the fact, already mentioned, that the Italian *maestri* for the most part set the pace, formulated

the principles and founded the traditions for subsequent developments.

We have spoken of the principal Italian School and have pointed out the significance of the Piedmontese and Paduan Schools with Somis and Tartini for their founders. They were the ones from which through Pugnani emerged Viotti. At the same time neither Germany nor France had stood still. The older French School in Paris which traced its origin and traditions back to pre-Corelli times, to the *Rois des Ménétries* and the *vingt-quatre violons* of Louis XIV (of whom Lully was chief), produced a number of able men like Jacques Aubert, de Mondonville, Guillemain, etc.; having from time to time replenished stagnating vitality through an influx of good Italian traditional blood, as in the case of Leclair, Senaillé, Lahoussay and others, it culminated in the notable artist known to violinists by his studies, Pierre Gaviniés, born 1728, at about the coming of Viotti.

In Germany, on the other hand, various schools exercised their influence: In Dresden we meet as one of the earliest German violinists, Joh. Georg Pisendel, a pupil of Vivaldi; in Berlin the Tartini pupil Graun and that sympathetic artist Franz Benda, a Bohemian by birth; in Munich, the brothers Cröner and Joseph Holtzbogen already mentioned, as a pupil of Tartini. From Mannheim, more important than any of the three cities mentioned, hailed Leopold Mozart, born 1719, who embodied the characteristic principles of the older Mannheim School in his once famous violin method, besides several noteworthy men, such as Joh. Carl Stamitz and his pupil Cannabich; Anton Stamitz, son of Johann, who having settled in Versailles

taught Rodolph Kreutzer; also Fränzl, father and son; and particularly the brothers Eck, Joh. Friederich, who is considered one of the best of the earlier of the German violinists, and Franz Eck, whose claim to fame rests chiefly on the distinction of having been the teacher of Ludwig Spohr.

Spohr has been Germany's greatest contribution to violin art, and the fact that he was also eminent in his time in the large forms of composition, symphonies, oratorios, etc., lends additional weight to his personality and importance in connection with our subject. Born 1784, (two years after Paganini) as the son of a physician at the small, north German town of Brunswick, Spohr gave early signs of musical talent, although not in so prodigious a fashion as Viotti. Two violinists of the ducal court orchestra, one Kumisch and, subsequently, the concertmaster of that institution, Maucourt, were entrusted with his first instruction. And after some youthful adventures and vicissitudes which make interesting reading in Spohr's autobiography and ended with his enlisting the patronage of the duke of the small realm, he became at his patron's expense the pupil of Franz Eck, with whom he spent a year's apprenticeship in travelling. He would have liked to study with Viotti, the duke having left him the choice of a teacher, but this master had then already abandoned the violin for commercial account-books. Young Spohr nevertheless took to himself some useful Viotti ideas from hearing Pierre Rode, which is rather significant as it shows that Spohr recognized the superiority of the Viotti Italian style over that of the older Mannheim School, of which through Eck he had become an exponent.

The quick and wide recognition of his talent not only

in Germany but in England where he became a special favorite, secured for him several posts of honor, the last being that of Court Kapellmeister at Cassel which he held until his enforced resignation two years before his death on October 22nd, 1859. With Spohr the supremacy of the Mannheim School gravitated in the early part of the Nineteenth Century to Cassel; there he wrote most of his big works and taught his many pupils, among them, Ferdinand David, (1810-1873) the famous Leipzig *concertmeister*, quartette player, composer and editor of old classic masterworks.

Already before Spohr's death David succeeded in drawing the violinistic main current to Leipzig, to the famous Conservatorium in that city founded in 1842 by Mendelssohn. For a generation or more David was a great power in Germany. Among his numerous pupils towered besides the veteran Henry Schradieck (1846-1918), (also a pupil of Léonard), the late S. Jacobsohn of Chicago and Arno Hilf (1858-1909), especially Wilhelmj (1845-1908). After the passing of David, the superior talent and commanding personality of Joachim made the *Hochschule* of Berlin the centre of violin playing in the Fatherland. As in the century before Tartini's pupils, only in proportion as of ten to one, so pupils of the *Hochschule*, good, bad and indifferent, may be found almost everywhere where the violin is taught.

To return, however, to Spohr, without wishing to depreciate his eminence and all round importance as executant, teacher and especially composer for the violin, it would be a mistake to see in him as great an epoch-making force in violin art as Viotti. While his contemporaries have much to say of his violinistic accomplishments, his large

and noble tone, the strength of his fingers, his unfailing intonation, etc., neither these executive qualities nor his long devoted work as teacher, or even his compositions with their many arresting beauties would have secured for Spohr the place which Viotti occupies in the history of violin playing. It was the style in which these two, perhaps equally gifted men, differed and which decided their respective influence on their own generation and posterity in favor of Viotti, particularly on the didactic side, on which the progress of the art has always depended more than on anything else.

Baillot calls style in violin playing "le choix des moyens d'expression," the choice of the means of expression. It is, as in literature, a subtle, indefinable thing, the outcome of individuality as well as, and indeed chiefly, the technical way of expressing it; and the latter centres, broadly speaking, on the functioning of the bow arm, either favoring variety of expression through bowing or otherwise.

Spohr's very compositions are a commentary on his style of playing. In their sameness of melodic design and passage work, their slow and heavy tread, their lack of striking rhythms and happy dynamic contrasts and the almost complete absence in them of all lighter, fanciful bowing styles (which Tartini had already cultivated), they go far to show its limitations. Spohr's style—to begin with, the product of overwhelmingly early German traditions and training on which some later autodidactic discoveries were grafted—was, indeed, too strongly individualistic, too much embodied in himself and dependent on his mental and physical idiosyncrasies (to speak only of his immense hands in which violin and bow were like small toys, and of his body more than six feet high), to become easily and success-

fully transferred to others, much less to accommodate itself to future exigencies and so to form a broad bed for progress. Already Ferdinand David by temperament and choice compromised and became an eclectic, that is, an advocate of an amalgam of Spohr's and the modern French style; and the majority of his pupils followed their master's middle course.

Viotti's style on the other hand represented, firstly, a consummation of the best traditions of the old classical schools of Italy, on which for a hundred and fifty years the whole fabric of the art had securely rested; and having, secondly, at the threshold of the Nineteenth Century emerged in modernized form from the process of rejuvenescence of old forms and traditions (for which we are indebted to Viotti's genius), it became with him the ideal vehicle of expression, and after him, the style *par excellence* which not only went best with the musical progress of the times but permitted also an indefinite expansion in conformity to any demands made on the violin by future composers.

The first to benefit by it were the French, since Viotti spent his artistic manhood in Paris and there taught his pupils. Certain characteristics in Viotti's playing, part and parcel of his style, would have appealed in the first place to the French temperament. They would have been largely of a rhythmical nature, that is, the power and means of enhancing rhythm, precision, neatness, piquancy, fancifulness and accentuation. And these characteristics grafted on the French *naturel*, drew in their train the desire for, an attention to more varied and graceful styles of bowing to which the inherent nature of the instrument lends itself al-

most as much as to pure *cantabile*, and which also the general progress in composition more and more demanded.

In France for a number of decades the Italo-Viotti style-traditions were preserved in perhaps greater purity than anywhere else, the Conservatoire National de Paris having made itself under the guidance of Rode and Baillot avowedly the nursery of them, although it is true that just among French violinists Paganini's tremendous influence was for a time strongest and threatened to swamp what had till then been held sacred. And in some cases it did.

From Paris primarily at all events, these traditions with added modernisms, gradually found their way over violin-playing Europe which caused one of Viotti's biographers to call him the *maitre de l' Europe;* they found it all the more readily in proportion as the more varied and complex nature of the compositions of the great masters favored the exploitation of the outstanding features of this, let us call it, Italo-modern style of violin playing, and, *vice versa*, while it suited less those of the older German and Spohr School.

Following the European conquest of the former, if we turn to any of the modern schools, let us take that of Vienna for instance, which goes back to the well known composer Dittersdorf and Wranitzki for its scions: it had to begin with, certain natural, temperamental leanings to and geographical connections with the Italian schools; but in Joseph Boehm (1795-1867), with whom as the teacher of Joseph Joachim, H. W. Ernst, Jacob Dont (the teacher of Leopold Auer), Edmund Singer, Eduard Remenyi and other celebrities, its real significance for modern violin art commences — we have a happy blend of the Italian-French

(Viotti-style) traditions (through Boehm having been a pupil of Pierre Rode) and national (Hungarian) traits which had little in sympathy with the *bona fide*, uncompromising German (Spohr) style.

It is similar with the school of Prague founded by a pupil of Viotti, Pixis, from which eventually emanated the wonderful pedagogic genius, Otakar Ševčik and through him Jan Kubelik and a large number of other exceptional players. And it is similar also with the school of Berlin represented until a few years ago by, and called after that great, violinistic master Joseph Joachim, although in his case it has often been the mistake of the popular mind to confound purely musical tendencies (a love for Spohr's music) with bowing style-tendencies and characteristics. With regard to these Joachim's playing showed little of the old Spohr School.

In so far as the post-Viotti French violinists like Charles Dancla, Féréol Mazas, Delphin Alard, etc., kept themselves free from Paganini influences (a very high elbow) and certain other exaggerations of style, they, too made their pupils heirs to this same classical legacy.

In the Franco-Belgian School lastly, which counted among its older representatives, i.e., the early part and middle of the Nineteenth Century some of the best known virtuosi and teachers of their day like Charles de Bériot, Henri Vieuxtemps, Hubert Léonard, Massart, etc., and of a younger generation, down to our time, celebrities such as Eugene Ysaye, César Thompson, Jenö Hubay, Henri Marsick, Ovide Musin, Fritz Kreisler and many more — the Viotti-Italian traditions are perhaps most strikingly in evidence, although of course, as in all cases, more or less

blended with supplementary characteristics which men of originality and genius like de Bériot, Vieuxtemps, etc., were bound to impress on their followers and which in time became grafted on to and one with the older traditions.

For we must not lose sight of the fact that a personality however commanding, does not necessarily make a school, least so in modern times of steam, when the ends of the earth are brought near, when with the freer intercommunication of the best minds, tradition, from being the once jealously guarded treasure of a few, has become almost universal property. Neither can nor must a school (that is *à fond* a nursery of traditions and only as such a teaching method) and were it the best in the world, turn out commanding personalities. It can only help to develop them, show the elect the best and easiest way up the steep, long climb toward perfection, that is all.

Chapter IX

METHODS

IN the previous chapter we have expanded on the subject of schools and style so that the general outlines of the progress of our art might be more clearly seen, and also because we wished to emphasize the vitality of the principles which underlie the art of violin playing and are traceable in all good players to the present day, thanks to the preserving work of tradition.

And what are traditions? There are two ways, either single or combined to transmit a truth, a principle, a fact; namely, doctrine and example. In other words, through the spoken or written word, through rules and explanations, and through personal demonstration. Both these media of transmission coming under the head of tradition, it is impossible to say which has been the more potent one in the evolution of violin playing. But inasmuch as all explanations and personal demonstration will usually be found to go together in teaching the violin, the term tradition is understood to imply this idea in the first place as compared to the narrower specified one of the traditional printed method.

Violinists use certain violinistic terms, such as *detaché, martelé, staccato,* etc., without stopping to think that they are traditional names. And as the name so has the method or manner of executing these styles of bowing been handed down from teacher to pupil and again from the pupil be-

come teacher to his pupil; and could we but trace it far enough back we would probably in most cases come to the original pathfinder, Tartini, Somis or Locatelli or some other Italian *maestro* of the Eighteenth Century.

With respect to printed "Methods" which have come down to us along with oral tradition, do violin students of to-day realize the full extent of the privileges relating to their art, into which they were born, realize the unparalleled opportunities they have for studying under good masters, the benefit of improved "Methods," countless valuable studies and pieces, cheap music, cheap concerts, etc., who can enumerate them all? Perhaps they don't, and it may be interesting to them to know something of the "Methods" by which the old masters turned out pupils, and compare them with those now in use.

The oldest "Method" extant is, we have seen, that by Francesco Geminiani, published in 1740 in London under the title: "The Art of Playing the Violin containing Rules necessary to attain Perfection on that Instrument, etc. . . . . "

The author prefaces his work with the following quaint remarks:

> "The Art of playing the violin consists in giving that Instrument a Tone that shall in a manner rival the most perfect human voice and in executing every piece with Exactness, Propriety and Delicacy according to the true Intention of Musick. But as to the imitating the Cock, Cuckoo, Owl and other Birds, or the Drum, French Horn, Tromba, Marina and the like and also sudden shifts of the Hand from one Extremity of the Fingerboard to the other accompanied with Contortions of the Hand and Body and all other such tricks rather belong to Professors of Legerdermain and Posture masters than to the Art of Musique, the Lovers of that Art are not to expect to find anything of that Sort in this Book. But I flatter myself that they will find in it whatever is necessary for

the instruction of a Just and regular Performer on the Violin. This Book will also be of use to Performers on Vcello and in some sort to those who begin to study the Art of Composition. After the several Examples I have added 12 Pieces in different stiles for a Violin and Vcello with a thorough bass for the Harpsichord. I have not given any directions for the performing them because I think the Learner will not need any, the foregoing rules and Examples being sufficient to qualify him to perform any Musick whatsoever. I have nothing to add but to beg the Favour of all Lovers of Musick to receive this book with the same candour that is offered to them by their most obedient humble servant."—F. G.

Thus, the preface with its mixture of earnestness and naïve pretentiousness! The unconsciously humorous reference to the imitating of the cock and owl and other birds was, as we have seen in Carlo Farina's case, not wholly unjustified. In the early days of violin playing the border line between what we would call charlatanism, trickery and legitimate art seems to have been a very faint one, indeed. . When we come to the contents proper, the first thing which impresses us as remarkable is, as before stated, the unchanging validity of the elementary rules of violin playing. While we teachers of to-day are no doubt, and ought to be, more explicit about the many details relating to the correct position of the body and the violin, we might tell our beginners that, in the words of Geminiani: "the Violin must be rested turning the right hand side of the Violin a little downward so that there may be no necessity of raising the bow very high when the fourth string is to be struck." And further "observe that the head of the violin must be nearly horizontal with the part which rests against the breast that the hand may be shifted with facility without danger of dropping."

And equally true and applicable to the present day,

with only a few modifications, are the author's remarks on the subject of bowing.

He says: "The tone of the violin depends principally upon the right management of the bow. The bow is held at a small distance from the nut between the thumb and fingers, the hair being turned inwards against the back or outside of the thumb, in which position it is to be held free and easy and not stiff. The motion is to proceed from the joints of the wrist and elbow in playing quick notes, and very little or not at all from the joint of the shoulder; but in playing long notes where the bow is drawn from one end of it to the other, the joint of the shoulder is also a little employed. The bow must always be drawn parallel with the bridge, which cannot be done if it is held stiffly, and must be pressed upon the strings with the forefinger only and not with the whole weight of the hand. The best performers are least sparing with their bow and make use of the whole of it from the point of it under and even beyond their fingers. In the up-bow the hand is bent a little downward from the joint of the wrist when the nut of the bow approaches the strings, and the wrist immediately straightened or the hand rather a little bent back or upward, as soon as the bow is begun to be drawn down again.

"One of the principal beauties of the violin is the swelling or increasing and softening the sound which is done by pressing the strings with the forefinger more or less . . . .

"And lastly particular care must be taken to draw the bow smooth from one end to the other without any interruption or stopping in the middle. For on this principally and the keeping it always parallel with the bridge and pressing

it only with the forefinger upon the strings with discretion, depends the fine tone of the instrument."

It is true we may smile again and wonder at Geminiani advising "the learner to mark the finger board of his violin (as the author shows in his book) which will greatly facilitate his learning to stop in tune;" but our Italian *maestro* had no doubt to cater to unmusical as well as musical patrons, and he was diplomatic enough to leave this innocent little loophole to the former. We can certainly agree with him again when he gives "as the true position for the left hand" the well known one, whereby the first finger is placed on F on the E string, the second on C on the A string, etc., and when he explains the different positions on the violin. Antiquated he becomes when he departs from the narrow path of pure elementary didactics and in the paragraph on "ornamentations" speculates on the various emotions and passions, the trill, long or short, loud or soft, slow or fast, and the different kinds of grace notes may express.

By way of giving a general idea of Geminiani's Method, we may add that he divides it into twenty-three paragraphs and examples, and treats in them of the rudiments already quoted, the scales and different positions, the trill, ornamentations, arpeggios and double stopping.

For a first attempt of its kind the book is undeniably a remarkable achievement, that is, in the theoretical portions; for when we come to the practical application of the rules laid down, the actual study material, we meet with sore disappointment. Twelve insignificant pieces, or rather exercises in different styles, is all we get, and these with demands on the executive abilities of the pupil which he could not possibly have acquired by the perusal or even mastery of

the preceding theoretical rules. And yet the author in his preface declares: "I flatter myself they (the lovers of musick) will find in this book whatever is necessary for the institution of a just and regular performer of the violin" . . . . and further on: "I have not given any direction for the performing them (the pieces) because the learner will not need any, the foregoing rules and examples being sufficient to qualify him to perform any musick whatsoever."

Of course they were not, and here lies the great deficiency of the first and subsequent "methods," judged by the light of modern developments. Did Geminiani in his teaching supplement the wholly inadequate study material of his method by additional fingering and bowing exercises? We may presume that he did; at the same time, music it must be remembered, was precious one hundred and fifty years ago. Etudes, exercises, as we know them, did not exist; the teacher who wanted them had to write them himself and make his pupils copy them, or fall back on some suitable movement of a sonata of another master. Pieces, most probably formed the chief study material of the violin pupil of those days, of the beginner after he had mastered the preliminaries as well as of the advanced student. Now the study of pieces may possibly produce good musicians, but rarely, if ever good technicians on the violin, for the simple reason that they require for their interpretation the combined simultaneous action of naturally opposed forces, viz., of mind trying to express itself and muscles not yet sufficiently trained. Playing a tolerably difficult piece under such conditions is like leading raw recruits into action. Instead of automatically and completely obeying the commands of the mind, the general-in-chief, the muscles in an

untrained state fail to obey, or obey only in part, and the result is a disjointed medley where, metaphorically speaking, one soldier shoots down and tramples upon another, friend or foe, despite what the general may do to bring them to order. Pieces, indeed, will not do to develop technic, muscles, tissue. They must ever be the end and aim, but not the means of technical development. In this respect, then, our present day students are infinitely better off than the pupils of Geminiani, and here may also be found one reason for the generally high, technical standard of modern players.

Sixteen years after Geminiani's work, which appeared in several editions and also in a German translation in Vienna, Leopold Mozart, then Kapellmeister of Salzburg, where his son, Wolfgang Amadeus, the great composer, was born, published his "Violinschule." The practical experienced musician and excellent pedagogue that Leopold Mozart proved himself to be in the education of his great son are also in evidence in his "Violinschule," and his German thoroughness makes him a great deal more explicit than the Italian master was. He has no sympathy with so unmusicianly a device as "marking the finger board of pupils by incisions or bits of paper pasted on it to facilitate his learning to stop in tune." Caustically he remarks: "If the pupil has a good ear for music such tricks should not be resorted to. If he lacks this he had better take a woodaxe in his hand than a violin." He also cautions the pupil to leave all the fingers on the strings when they are once down, and to place the fingers not "lengthwise" (flat), but "with knuckles up" on the strings, and not to attempt "any dance tunes until he has mastered the difficulty of playing all the

scales in tune." And the teacher who would be conscientious is told not to overlook the smallest fault in his pupil from the beginning, "as such faults become gradually an iron habit which is no more to be eradicated." And he enumerates some such habits as "moving the violin, moving the body back and forth, and the head, pulling a mouth and twisting the nose strangely when some difficulty is met with, whistling or too noticeably snorting and grunting with the breath from the mouth and also the nose in the execution of this or that perturbing passage; forced, unnatural contortions of the wrist and particularly the elbow and the tremendous motions of the whole body whereby often the stage or even the whole room in which he plays is shaken and the listeners, at the sight of so hard working a wood-cutter, are moved to laughter or pity."

We see how observing and thorough old Mozart is in his "Method." On the other hand, with regard to the purely artistic elementary principles and rules for left and right arm, tone-production, etc., the German master is more assailable. Indeed, when one reads in his very first sentence on holding the instrument: "There are chiefly *two* ways of holding the violin . . . . The first way has something agreeable and easy-going; the violin is held quite loosely without strain and effort against the chest sideways and in such a manner that the bow is drawn rather more perpendicularly than on a slant. This position no doubt looks very graceful, but the player will find it rather difficult and inconvenient for quickly shifting the hand into the higher positions because the instrument, not resting firmly, must necessarily drop, unless by long practice the player has acquired the knack of holding it with the thumb and forefinger." . . . .

when one reads this sentence one is inclined to think that the old Mannheim School from which Leopold Mozart sprang was yet in a state of transition, that it had not yet entirely freed itself from some of the crudities adhering to it from the mediaeval fiddle and *Stadtpfeifer* state. Mozart, it is true, gives the preference to the second way of holding the instrument, whereby its right side (not the left, as we have it) is placed against the neck under the chin; but how different in this respect is the attitude of the Corelli pupil. With serene confidence in the perfection of his classical training he gives only one, the only way.

Something similar in crudity in old Mozart's violinistic views, as compared to the refined ones of the Italian *maestro*, is shown in his advice to "hold the bow (with the forefinger and thumb) more upright to the strings than with the hair turned towards the finger board, as by so doing more strength is obtained and the fault prevented which some players have (here he surely meant to hit at the Italians) of playing with the bow so much turned to the side that when they press a little they play with the wood instead of the horsehair." He also recommends the pupil always to play with "a loud and manly tone." It is likely that the excellent old master, true to his Mannheim training, was a crank on the question of "the big tone at all costs," which unfortunately too often (and with beginners always) is synonymous with a rough and uncouth one. No intelligent teacher nowadays will tell his pupil to play loudly from the start. The advice of Tartini, quoted below, should be taken to heart. This great Italian master knew better indeed.

Mozart's "Violinschule" saw several editions, enjoying for a long time an undisputed popularity. In spite of its

many merits, it shares with Geminiani's method utter inadequacy in study-material, and on that account, if for no other reason, was destined also to share with it the fate of permanent and complete oblivion. We do not think it has been translated into English.

Passing over Locatelli's "L' Arte del Violino" (twenty-four capriccios *ad libitum*), which shows little or nothing of method but a great deal of what is technically bewildering to masters even now, and another amusing attempt at a violin method by Antonio Lolli (born 1732) which he calls *L'Ecole du Violon en Quatuor pour l'usage des Elèves et des Maitres* (Violin School in Form of a Quartet for the use of pupils and masters) and in which after a few sound enough but exceedingly scanty remarks on holding the violin and bow, etc., he sets out to teach the art of violin playing within the compass of three movements of a sonata with the accompaniment of a second violin, viola and 'cello.

The Sonata, alias "method," begins with some easy, held out whole notes, which are presently followed by simple broken chords and other easy passages, short instructive remarks as to the amount of bow and the part of the bow to be used, etc., being inserted between the staff lines in small print. But on the same first page Lolli cannot resist the temptation of introducing some tenths (of which he was a master) and before the first movement is over he has unburdened himself of, and of course the pupil has learned to execute, springing bow arpeggios, tenths, octaves, thirds and broken chords to the limit of the finger board — yes, the lucky pupil, a truly royal road, or rather short cut, to technique!

This *opus* with richly and beautifully engraved frontispage is dedicated in elegantly worded French to Prince Potemkin, the famous general of Catherine II, of Russia. It is not on record whether Potemkin, the great winner of Catherine's battles, played the violin in his leisure hours or tried to learn the art by this method, but if he did, he doubtless met his Waterloo in those tenths and octaves.

Passing over this "method" which one is scarcely inclined to take seriously, and yet another, much more elaborate and pretentious but scarcely less absurd as a didactic phenomenon than Lolli's, one by Woldemar, one of Lolli's two pupils, we stand next before the most interesting document of early violin-pedagogics extant, Tartini's Lesson by letter to his pupil Maddelena Lombardini Sirmen.

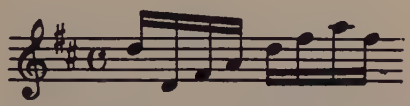
It is, of course, no "Method" in the sense of the works commented upon but it shows a great teacher's method of teaching and its educational value makes the mention of it in this connection most desirable. The aesthetic fundamental principles of bowing as compared to the elementary technical ones in Geminiani's work are here laid down by Tartini with a clearness and insight into the nature of our wonderful instrument that, like these, they are true and applicable for all time.

The master wrote this letter in the declining years of his life, viz., in March, 1760, when he was sixty-eight: the more remarkable is the freshness and youthful enthusiasm and eagerness to impart knowledge that it breathes in every line. The recipient Maddelena Sirmen developed into a very good violinist. She appeared in London with success, but later years seems to have devoted herself entirely to singing.

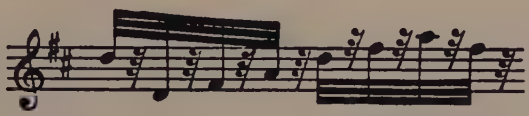
As to its contents: after a few apologetic remarks on his having been prevented by some disagreeable business from sooner keeping his promise to write, and telling his pupil to demand of him an explanation on any point not sufficiently clear to her, the master begins his lesson: "Your first and foremost study" he writes, "must be devoted to the use of the bow. You must become absolute master over it in passage work as well as *cantabile*. The setting the bow on the string must resemble more a breath on the string than a hitting of it. After this light start of the bow, the stroke follows immediately, and now you will be able to increase the tone as much as you like; after the light start there is no more risk of the tone becoming screeching or scratchy. Of this light start with the bow you must become master at all parts of it, at the middle as well as at the two extreme ends, and with both up and down stroke." He then recommends the practice of the "slow sustained bowing, beginning *pp* and increasing the tone to *ff*, with the up and down stroke," and "to devote to it at least one hour per day, not uninterruptedly, but half an hour in the forenoon and half an hour in the afternoon," adding, "Remember that this is the most important and most difficult study. After you have succeeded with it, the *messa di voce*, for which one begins *pp*, increases the tone to *ff* and returns to *pp* in one stroke, will not cause you much trouble. The lightest touch of the bow on the string will have become easy to you, and you will be able to do with your bow everything you like."

For developing quickness of bowing, which, he says, "depends on light contact with the strings," he gives as the best advice: "To practise daily one or other of Corelli's fugues which consist entirely of sixteenth notes. There are

three of these in the Sonatas for Violin Solo, Op. V. . . . . Practice them slowly at first, then always a little faster and faster, until you can play them with the utmost speed. But I must here add a twofold advice; the first is: That you play with a short stroke, that is, detached and with a little pause after each note. They are written in the following form:



but they must be played as though they were written: like this:



"The other (advice) is that you play them first with the point of the bow; after you have succeeded there, further down between the point and middle and finally at the middle. Do not forget that you must not always begin these fugues with the down stroke, but alternately with the down and up stroke." This is, of course, the French method of learning the grand *detaché* introduced by Viotti, and in principle our martelé.

Equally admirable in the letter are the portions devoted to the study of the positions and the trill; but, of course, it is hardly necessary to say that none of the remarks are, strictly speaking, for beginners. On the elements of holding the violin and bow, etc., and all the many things which of necessity must precede any attempt on the part of the pupil to do what is here prescribed for the bow and the fingers, the master is silent. We can only surmise that he

had previously communicated this elementary knowledge to his pupil or supplemented this letter by others; or entrusted personal demonstration and all the rest to other well-tried hands. For we may be sure that he of all teachers would have been most particular about first foundations, knowing that the future technical fabric depended largely on them. In his first famous "L'Arte dell' Arco," finally, we get not a method or compendium on bowing, but fifty ingenious variations on a theme by Corelli, intended for advanced students and requiring an artist for their perfect rendition.

The first two violin methods worthy of the name appeared a little over sixty years after Tartini's death (1770), one by a Frenchman and the other by a German, viz., Baillot and Louis Spohr, both serious and, as their authors thought, exhaustive expositions of the principle of the art, both authoritative and dictated by the highest sentiments and aspirations, written by acknowledged masters of the art. It is difficult to say to which belongs the palm. The writer's personal leanings go to the Frenchman; nor does he think that he is wrong in attributing to it by far the greater influence on succeeding works of the kind, and to all violin art in general. From the point of view of tradition it is the most valuable work of its kind in existence.

Baillot forms through it one of the most important links with a great past; and in this sense furnishes the literary supplement to Viotti's work as executant and teacher. To understand its unique position: Pierre Baillot François de Sales came from a noble old French family, his father having been an advocate of state. The son received a splendid education. His early ardent love for music and the violin was only gratified in comparatively late years of

discretion and judgment, and what is significant, not in his own country but in Italy through a pupil of Tartini's favorite pupil, Nardini, a violinist named Pollani. After his return to Paris Baillot became acquainted with Viotti whom he heard at a "Concert Spiritual," and whom he took for his life long model.

On being made a professor at the famous Paris Conservatoire by the side of Rode and Gaviniés, he was commissioned, as the right man for the task, to write in collaboration with Rode and Kreutzer a Violin Method for use at the Conservatoire, a work which should embody all that could be gathered from the best of the past and present. Both Rode and Kreutzer died before the work was well under way and Baillot finished the work alone and it was published (with an obituary notice on his collaborators in the introduction) in 1831, shortly after Paganini's first triumphs in the French capital. It is the noblest work of its kind; the text, revealing throughout a rare love and enthusiasm, rises often to a poetic eloquence which makes it not surprising that sentences from it have become historical bywords and are quoted to this day.

It is divided into a number of sections or articles, each dealing with a certain aspect of the subject, and is subdivided into paragraphs and, subsequently, lessons. We get minute descriptions of, and rules progressively arranged for studying the fundamental bowing styles; also three plates with illustrations, twenty in number, of every position in standing and sitting. We may reasonably infer that Baillot, though himself a famous executant and teacher, incorporated in his comments before all what he had seen, heard and experienced in his daily intercourse with the best artists of his day

and with Pollani. Indeed, he expressly states in the course of his text that he wishes his method not to appear so much as the fruit of individual observation but as the result of the observations of many. His explanations show us the teacher to the manner born, leaving nothing to be desired in point of view of clearness and lucidity. And they might have been penned yesterday, so applicable, without scarcely any modification, are they for modern needs.

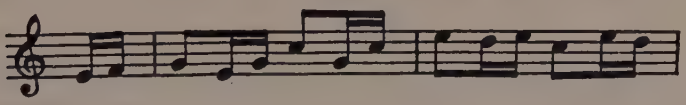
That this monumental work, which by the way was published at fifty francs, should have fallen into partial disuse may be cause for surprise and regret; but it is due to reasons of which we shall speak presently. The fact that it has been recently reissued at a low price cannot be said to have averted this fate, for this new edition contains only the study material of the original, which the violin world surfeited with works of this kind could easily have dispensed with; while the text, the most valuable portion and the one most valued by the author has been omitted. Thus it has been deprived of its real *raison d'être* and pedagogic import.

Spohr's Method which has been translated into English and even lately issued in an abridged edition by Augener's,* appeared two years before that of Baillot, in Vienna. The text which in Baillot's work forms the main feature, is here the least, not indeed in volubility but from a literary point of view and especially in intrinsic instructive value, compared to the excellence of the musical examples.

Great composer that Spohr was he could not help making these examples worthy of him, but their very excellence, musically, is their fault from a didactic stand point. Spohr

*London.

confesses in his introductory note that, although he had formed many pupils, he had never taught a beginner, and this is apparent through the whole first part of his method. It was impossible for him to identify himself with the needs of the beginner of average ability as the Frenchman does, if not in his musical examples at least in the text. In consequence the instruction derived from Spohr's method is fragmentary, jumpy, unsystematic, one-sided. To give but one or two instances: he begins right enough with the open strings, although in a form which the beginner must find difficult to master, i.e., held out very slowly; but in the following section where fingering is introduced in the most uncomfortable of scales, C major, he presents such fingering (interval study) in slurs of eight whole notes over two strings. He then proceeds with pretty studies in rhythms which at this stage the average pupil is quite incapable of doing justice to, both as to bowing and the left hand. And difficulties in both respects increase at a terrific rate: What can a pupil who has barely learned correctly to put his fingers down and to draw his bow the whole length and the upper third, (the lower and middle third having never been as much as mentioned) do with a piece which begins thus:



To the pedagogue with real insight a study like this presupposes a fairly advanced state of technic, an independent quick action of bow and fingers and a certain command of *martelé* wrist and fore-arm stroke over two strings. And in this manner Spohr goes on piling piece upon piece of an

intricate nature. With no preparatory finger exercises, etc., preceding Section 8 (on scales) begins with scales of fifteen notes slurred in one bow, ascending and descending in *Allegro* time and with modulations. Almost the worst feature of Part I of the work, which includes studies for all the positions and scales through three octaves to the high harmonic E, is that it does not contain an exercise for the bow arm alone; short detached bowings of a nondescript nature with the upper third and whole bow strokes, a bewildering variety of difficult slurring over all the strings and, at times very difficult intonation is all the pupil has practised; and naively the author remarks at the beginning of the 11th Section: "On the management of the bow and various bowing styles": "it is high time now that the further development of this most important part of the mechanism of violin playing should be proceeded with."

Without going further into detail or touching here upon the complete absence of any reference to springing bowings, *sautillé*, springing bow arpeggio, the raised bow at the nut, etc., ... or his vituperation of the use of artificial harmonics, we see that Spohr's once famous method, however excellent in some respects and worthy of the great artist, fails in most other essentials. With Baillot's it certainly shares the utter inadequacy of the number and choice of study material, and the lack of real method in dealing with beginners for whom a method is primarily intended. And the same fault must be found with the various methods which followed these two.

In 1859 Alard published his voluminous "Method du Violon." While he reduces his text to the necessary, not to say scanty, information on the execution of the chief

bowing styles, his progress is, if anything, still more rapid than that of his predecessors. He explains the manner of executing the *sautillé*, and for a study of this difficult style of bowing begins at once on an *étude* of one page and a half in sixteenth notes, the notes not repeated several times—no, a stroke to each note, which we know is the most difficult form of *sautillé* and requires a command of bow and fingers which only a very advanced student can possibly possess. It is true the author recommends first, to study the *sautillé* on the open strings, but . . . .

With Baillot and Spohr he seems absolutely to ignore the great difficulty on the violin of scales through two, not to mention three octaves. Before the student has properly learned the positions in C major he is introduced to scales in all keys, not only in single notes but in thirds, sixths and octaves.

While the same reproach cannot very well be brought against the method of de Bériot to which we next come, this master of elegant style is no less unmethodic in other respects. Pretty *cantabile* melodies in which the first part abounds, are good enough in their way, but they do not give technic, when technic and a good deal of it, is presently demanded by the author. With de Bériot the text is again more copious; but questions of supreme importance to the beginner are more often than not passed over while others of an aesthetic nature are expounded with undue explicitness. De Bériot's is nevertheless a fine work with qualities which will continue to recommend it to teachers and pupils.

Ferdinand David's "Violin Schule" is a slighter work and on a lower plane of ideals. It practically introduces nothing new, either in treatment or substance. The chief

material in the first part which includes the study of the positions, consists in small, suitable, but none too well graded pieces, a few bowing exercises thrown in; and the second part again in scales, broken chords, thirds, sixths and other intricate double stopping.

Passing over numerous subsequent "methods" by Friederich Hermann, Schoen, Henning, Dessau, etc., ... which on the whole follow the same trend and of which only a few rise above a fair utilitarian mediocrity, we come to the more recent methods by Wilhelmj and Joachim. One naturally expected a great deal from these great masters in violin playing. And very good things their "Methods" contain, both as to text and musical examples. But it is doubtful whether either of these "methods" will be used a few years hence. The impossibility of incorporating in one work of reasonable size all that a method for beginners and advanced students of the violin should contain to be complete and really serve its end and aim, shows itself in them as in all the methods preceding them. Baillot recognized this fact when he wisely said in his introduction: "It has seemed to us that the first aim of a method should be to develop the intelligence and exercise the judgment so that all the efforts of labor and the result of patience may not be rendered vain. There is no lack to-day of material for developing technique, for every difficulty special studies are provided; but a "method" must guide in the use and arrangement of these materials, must make the student see the bond which unites them and the purpose they should serve. Either the text or the musical examples must remain incomplete, inadequate, unsatisfactory."

And here we come to the last "Method" that of O.

Ševčik. Of the failing referred to, this Bohemian master mind steered free in calling his Op. 6 "A Method for Beginners" and making it strictly for beginners. And while suppressing almost all text, he supplements this "method" for beginners—and here lies the greatness of his scheme—by works as complete each with respect to one special aspect, as it is possible to make it, all forming one continuous whole, systematically, progressively arranged so that they cover the whole of technical development on the violin.

Some of his detractors have found fault with his superabundance of study material—staggering we do not deny it, to those who judge without examining or who examine without being able or fair-minded enough, to judge rightly; the fact remains and it is a stupendous one, that Otakar Ševčik alone has solved the problem of a method which is a method all complete and satisfactory, a method, technically considered, which will fit any student of average talent and sufficient perseverance and intelligence to reach the goal necessary for the performance of the most difficult concertos and solos for the violin without so much as seeing any other work of *études* or studies of any kind; thus comprising within its many pages all that it is technically possible to teach on the violin.

Chapter X

NATIONAL SURVEY

THERE remains yet one aspect in the development of violin art which hitherto has barely been touched upon: the internationalization of violin playing. Ostensibly it is a product of the early middle and second half of the Nineteenth Century, not exactly concommitant with the invention of the steam engine but doubtless influenced by it. For until then little was heard of great violinists outside of Italy, Germany and France.

England occasionally sent a stray bird across the channel (for example the violinist Bridgetower for whom Beethoven is said to have composed the Sonata, Op. 47, which he eventually dedicated to Kreutzer); but, speaking generally, the island kingdom was from the beginning receptive to and remunerative for, rather than productive in, great exponents of the violin. Excepting John Bannister born in London 1630, Matthieu Duborg (born 1703) a pupil of Geminiani, Henry Blagrove, a pupil of Spohr and later John T. Carrodus and Henry Holmes, and for local enthusiasts and *bona fide* musical historians, encyclopaedists and librarians, English born violinists mean little more than names in a long list of names.

Russia, Poland and Hungary were the first countries to swell to a notable degree the ever growing violinistic stream from German and French sources after the Italian end of it

had virtually dried up. It was but natural that the rich musical soul of Russia, once the terrible serf thraldom of her lower classes had been loosened, should begin to exhibit a real devotion to the violin. And from this soil, which will be further liberated, the great heart of the Russian people—many Brodskys, Grimalys, Petchnikoffs, Mischa Elmans and Jascha Heifetzes will yet rise in the future to delight mankind.

And it will be the same with Russia's Slav sister, Poland, which has contributed those fine and once famous artists Charles Lipinski de Konski and Isidor Lotto and before all that prince of violinists—Henri Wieniawski (1832-1880) rivalled by few, excelled by none since the days of Paganini.

More abundant than from either Russia or Poland has been the violinistic harvest from Hungary. The wild, weird poetry of her gipsies and *puszta* inspired many of her sons to follow the spell of the fiddle: the names of Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst (1814-65) and Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) are household words in the violin world, the former the personification of the tender and sad pathos which exhales from his Elegie and withal one of the greatest virtuosi that crossed Paganini's path; Joachim the unsurpassed interpreter of the classics, quartettist and master teacher of unnumbered modern players. Other prominent Hungarian violinists have been mentioned already in connection with Joseph Boehm to whom may here be added as belonging to the earlier Vienna School—Ignaz Schuppanzigh of Beethoven fame and his pupil, Joseph Mayseder (born in Vienna and the teacher of Miska Hauser); also Franz Clement, likewise born in Vienna, for whom Beethoven wrote his

Violin Concerto and who played it for the first time in public in 1806.

In later days we meet, hailing from Hungary, Leopold Auer, great veteran-master teacher of many noted violinists of to-day and that sterling artist, composer and teacher Jenö Hubay with a long line of exceptional pupils, among whom Franz von Vescey, Telmanyi and Szigeti are best known.

Almost equally fertile in fiddlers has been Bohemia, now Czecho-Slovakia, from Leopold Jansa who taught the first really great woman violinist, Norman, Neruda (Lady Hallé), Wenzeslaus Pichl and Kalliwoda (still remembered by his productivity as composer), and especially Ferdinand Laub (1832-75) a master of the first rank, down to later and our own days Bennewitz already mentioned as teacher of Otakar Ševčik, Franz Ondricek, Karl Halir, Hans Sitt, etc., and Jan Kubelik, a pupil of Ševčik. But even other countries not till then represented in the long pageant of famous violinists appear presently as contributors. One of the first attracting world wide attention by the strongly marked national individuality and originality of his talent and also one of the first who carried the message of the violin across the ocean to the furthest parts of America was Ole Bull, (1810-80) the blue eyed, blond Norwegian. With a bow long as a viking's sword he drew strains from a Gasparo da Salò which linger yet in the memory of some old Western settlers.

And not less characteristically national in his playing, but of a very different artistic stamp, appeared next the wonderful Spanish Don Pablo de Sarasate (1844-1908). The world will not soon hear violin playing more exquisite

Having followed this study of the violin and of violin

art, however briefly and incompletely presented, through its varying course from crude, uncompromising beginnings, we have reached—is it the end?

No, not the end, for there is no end to violin art There cannot be, any more than there is to human progress, individually and collectively. Violin art will go on growing as long as man loves music and feels a desire to express himself in it. It may grow in a different direction than hitherto, for the limits of technical progress seem to have been reached with Paganini and his followers; men who may unfold till now untouched or undiscovered musical sides to our instrument. And there is already an undreamt of growth of its popularity and use as a comforter and joy-bringer to mankind:—the great movement started in England which has spread over America, of violin classes in the elementary schools opens to the Utopian dreamer vistas as wide and as heart warming as the horizon at sun rise.

The day may come when in nearly every household in all lands happy and contented parents and children will gather around the rich table of music provided by the great masters and future ones, with violins and 'cellos making music together and strengthening the bond of love between them and the great good giver of all good gifts. But those who are apostles sent to spread this gospel of the violin, the missionaries and pioneers to the many hearts that are yet closed to it the world over, that have not yet vibrated to the touch of the fiddle bow, would that they make themselves worthy followers of the fine old masters who devoted their lives to the same cause, with what effect we have seen.

FINIS

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